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LIFE, CULTURE, STYLE AND PLACES

intelligent life

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VISITS SIBELIUS'S HOUSE

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IN THE ETHIOPIAN HILLS

EDMUND DE WAAL
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AND HOW TO WRITE LIKE
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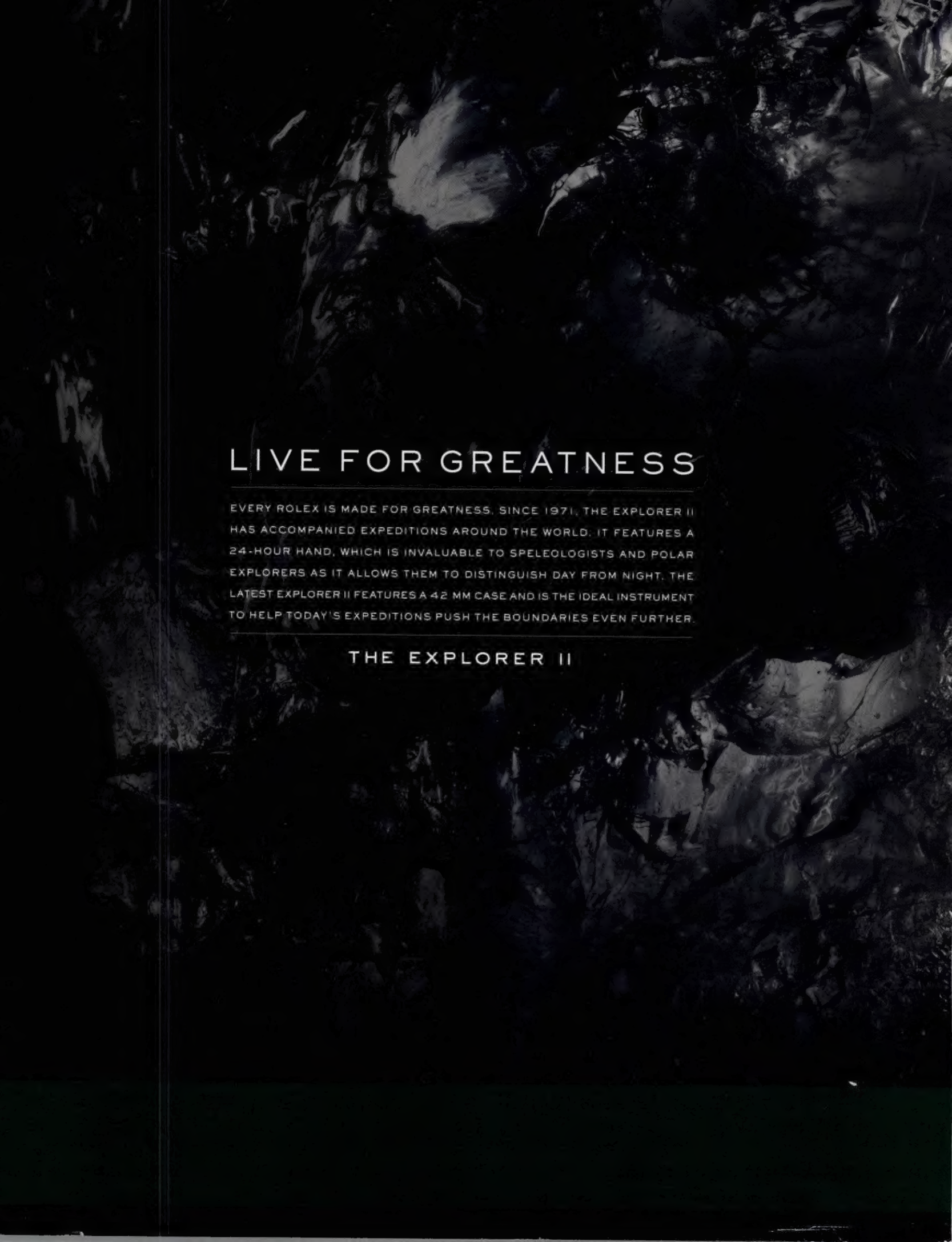

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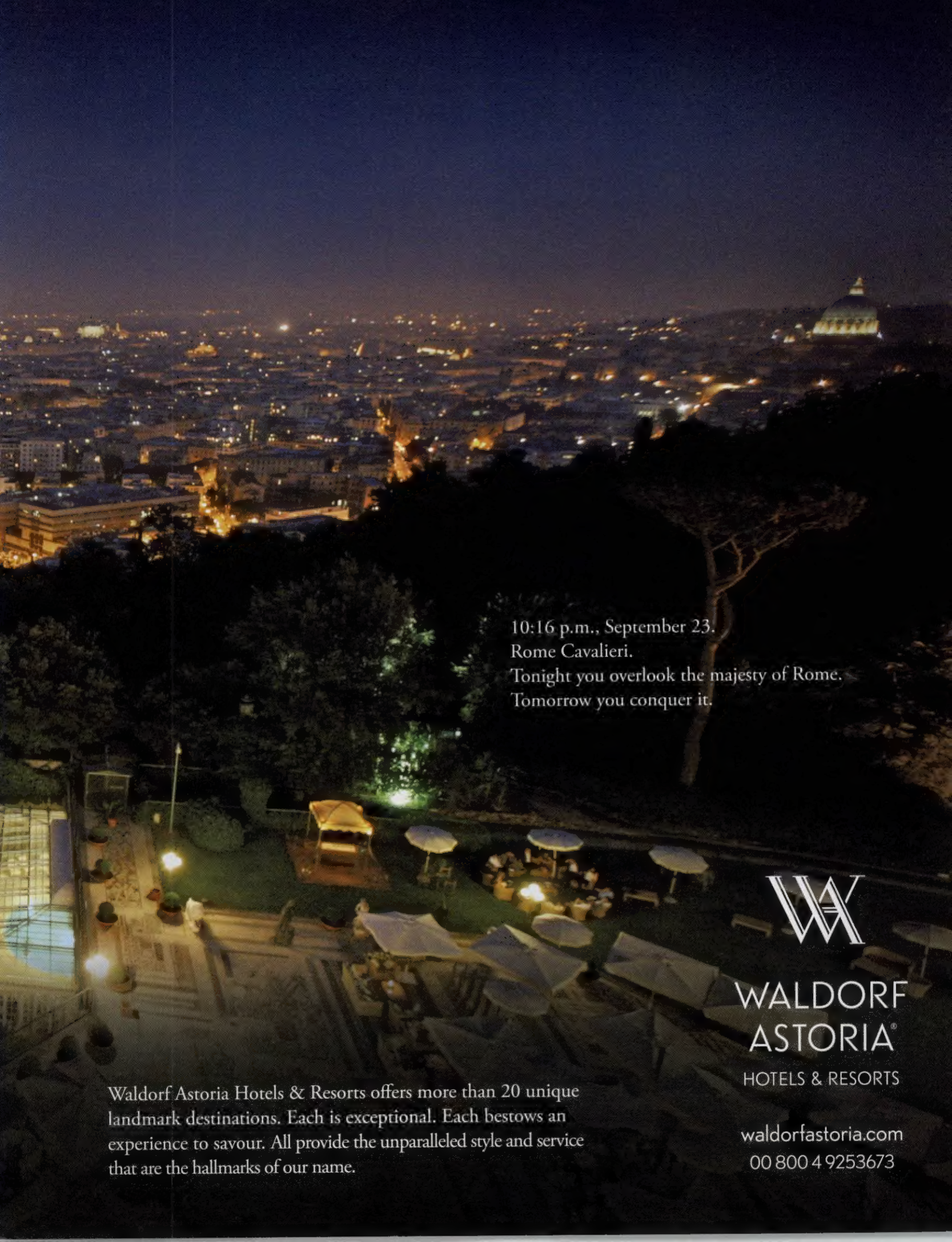
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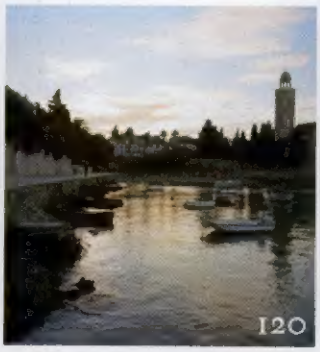
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COVER PHOTOGRAPH **IAN WINSTANLEY**

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Authors and museum pieces

FIFTEEN ISSUES AGO, in 2008, we launched a series called Authors on Museums. You never know whether a series will take off or crash-land. This one was given a flying start by our first author, Julian Barnes, who went to a small museum in a dusty corner of Sicily, the Mandralisca in Cefalu. He was amusing about some of the exhibits and penetrating about others, especially the 15th-century "Portrait of an Unknown Man" by Antonello da Messina, which had drawn him there: "confident yet wary, bold yet withholding…enigmatic, mocking…he feels close to us today".

Barnes approached the museum not as an art historian but as a human being, albeit one who knows how to make words sing. He set the tone for the series, and helped us attract writers of the calibre of William Boyd, Carlos Fuentes, Alan Hollinghurst and Ali Smith. Editors know from bitter experience that big names don't always turn in good work. One man of letters is infamous for it: his books are feted bestsellers, his articles dashed-off duds. So we haven't asked him.

Museums, happily, seem to bring the best out of our authors. In this issue Julian Barnes becomes the first of them to return, fresh from finally winning the Man Booker prize with "The Sense of an Ending". His subject is Sibelius's home, preserved as a museum by the Finnish nation. In **Music and silence** (*page 108*), Barnes writes about the house, the symphonies, Sibelius the man and the mystery of his last decades: an ending that is not easy to make sense of.

Intelligent Life has just reached a wide audience in America for the first time, after only being available on the iPad (where a third of our readers are in the US), online (just over half) or by subscription (a few brave souls). In October a 32-page slice of *Intelligent Life* went into *The Economist* in North America and Asia. Our big sister gave a party for us in New York (*right*), and we held our breath as the *Economist* faithful reacted to finding Warhol, handbags, muses and six pages of mist popping up between South African politics and the German economy. One reader found the insert "of dubious value and of no interest", another called it "luscious". One was "thrilled", one "excited", a third "sullied". The content was either "chilling", "wonderful" or "whimsical"; "incredible writing" or "culturally biased garbage". The ads provoked harsh words too: one man's meat is another man's Vuitton.

I had some sympathy with the doubters. It's an odd thing to find one magazine nestling inside another, especially when the host title has such a sharp identity. Almost every page of *The Economist* speaks with the same voice. *Intelligent Life* is not like that. Our editorial assistant, who was fielding the mail, noticed that early responses were mainly hostile, later ones much more positive. Which made sense, because we are superficially unlike the mothership: as our editor-in-chief, John Micklethwait, told the New York audience, "*IL* has terrible things in it like bylines and big pictures". Not to mention long features, individual voices and a Style section. But we share values, including independence, curiosity, accuracy, and a taste for clear prose and dry wit. We will hope to win over some of the doubters with the next insert in February.

A few things in this issue should melt the iciest heart. In a **photo essay** (*page 88*), Sebastião Salgado takes us back to biblical times. In **1962** (*page 62*), Matthew Engel explores a forgotten year. We meet two creative minds, **Thomas Heatherwick** (*page 46*) and **Edmund de Waal** (*page 80*), and start a **science** column (*page 44*). In **60 years in the same job** (*page 98*), we track down some charming survivors; in **health** (*page 40*) Irving Wardle reports on keep-fit for octogenarians. And in **Notes on a Voice** (*page 116*), Robert Butler pins down Shakespeare in 600 words that may well be pinned up on school noticeboards. - TIM DE LISLE

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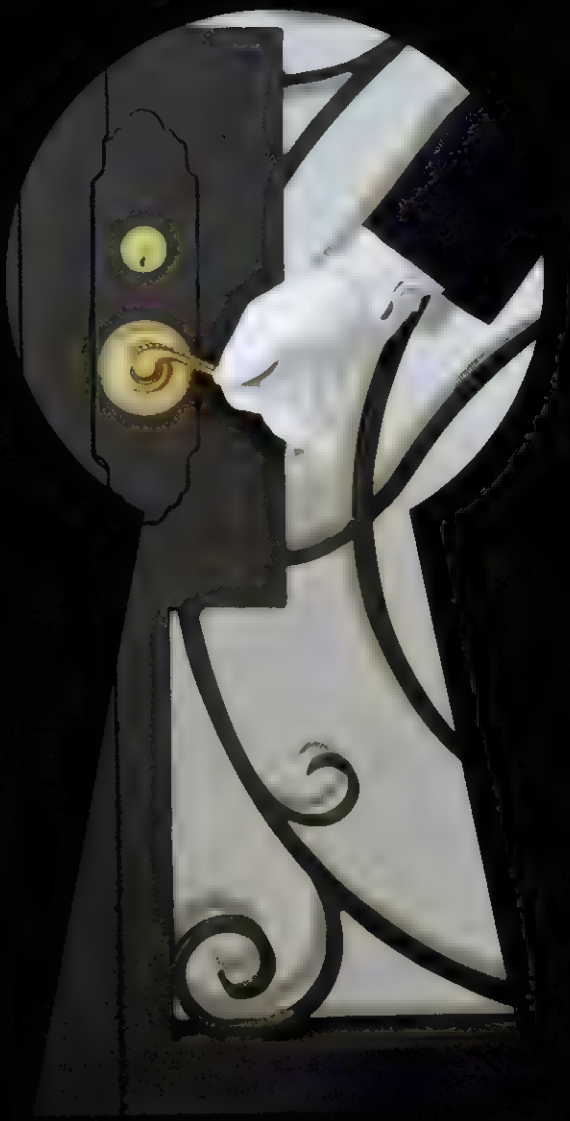

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LETTERS

GROUP THINK

Re: Crowds R Us (Intelligence, November/December)

Ian Leslie's overall point about crowd mentality is well made but it seems one-sided to charge Gustave Le Bon with "prejudice" because "when he saw a crowd he smelt only trouble" and "subhuman" behaviour. Le Bon mostly studied violent crowds, but his view was more nuanced than Leslie suggests. "Without a doubt criminal crowds exist," Le Bon wrote, "but virtuous and heroic crowds, and crowds of many other kinds, are also to be met with...The mental constitution of crowds is not to be learnt merely by a study of their crimes, any more than that of an individual by a mere description of his vices."

ROBERT PRECHTER, SOCIONOMICS INSTITUTE, GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

What worries us about an angry crowd is that its members are all annoyed about the same thing. Anger is always "righteous", so members of the group regard themselves as having a morally justified cause. If the least inhibited among them turn violent, the rest tend to regard the violence as the right thing to do, and many join in. Nothing suspends disbelief more effectively than moral indignation.

JEREMY BOWMAN

If you are controlled by a tyrant, what other option do you have but to protest as a crowd? Tyrants are unlikely to listen to the individual unless the individual supports them. To protest as a group might be messy, but it'll also be quicker.

KELVIN WATSON, BIRMINGHAM

Ian Leslie referred in his piece to the 7/7 bombings in London, but I don't see what they have to do with crowd behaviour. A train full of passengers is hardly a "crowd". They don't interact; in fact they do their best to pretend they're alone. And when disaster strikes, such a collection of people acts on individual impulse, not because of crowd mentality.

SOROS SORIA

The writing on the wall

Re: Handwriting: an elegy (Features, November/December)

I very much enjoyed the fact that your elegy to handwriting was written by the obituaries editor of *The Economist*. However, I am no sadder to see the death of handwriting than to see the passing of horse-drawn carriages. Life goes on.

CHRIS GLENNIE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Everyone used to be expected to write by hand. I hate to think that its elegance and grace will be a thing of the past. In my career as an advertising art director, writing, like sketching, is a means of visual thinking. But it's losing out to computer illustration programs. My kingdom for a piece of paper and a pencil.

ANN TRAINOR DOMINGUE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

When we write on computers our minds tend to drift, because our senses are stimulated far more than our creativity. There is a single-minded application to the task at hand when scribbling on paper. As Henry Ward Beecher said, "the pen is the tongue of the hand – a silent nurturer of words for the eye".

TIM LEE

A known unknown

Re: Herr Goose-Pimples (Culture, September/October)

I was surprised that Irving Wardle felt he had unearthed an "unknown German author" when he discovered Kurt Tucholsky. In fact, in Germany (and to a lesser extent in Sweden and France), Tucholsky enjoys outstanding, even heroic, fame both in the literary and political worlds. Countless schools, streets, libraries and literary prizes have been named after him, and his works are part of the school reading canon. Anyone interested in German culture will necessarily run into him sooner rather than later. So "discovering" Tucholsky is a bit like, say, presenting George Bernard Shaw to the public as a rare literary find.

CHRISTOPH RAETHKE, BERLIN

A quick needle

Re: String of perls (The Mission, November/December)

As a passionate and unapologetic knitter, I enjoyed Will Smith's account of learning the craft. But one of the first things he should have learned is that the stitch referred to in the title is written "purl". "Perl" is a programming language. It looks like you might have dropped a stitch.

TANYA OTT

What lies beneath

Re: A watery underworld (November/December)

Tom Wainwright ought to know that the spectacular blue water of many of the Yucatán peninsula's beautiful cenotes contains breathtakingly high >

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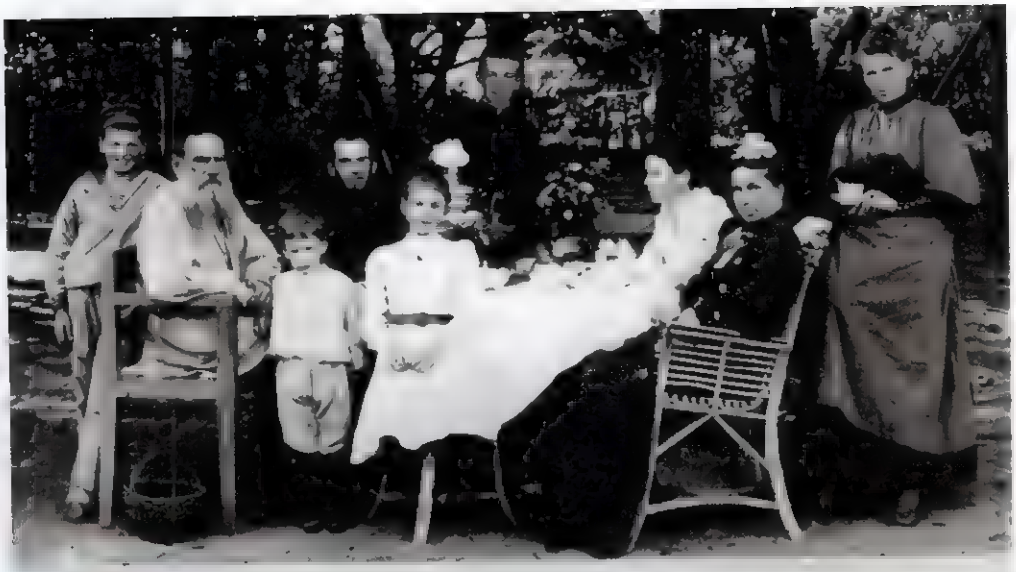

THE BEST TIME EVER: EARLY CHILDHOOD

In the last issue, we posed the second of our Big Questions: what was the best time, and place, to be alive? Six writers gave their answers, led by the historian Patrick Dillon. He made three assumptions to get the debate going: that we can time-travel in comfort, switch gender if we feel like it, and enjoy guaranteed good health. "We're looking for a turning point," he wrote, "a place living through changes whose effects are still with us." His vote went to London in the 1690s, when the stock market was "newfangled", the tradition of Parliament was beginning and leisure was thriving. "The modern world is starting," he wrote, "and I want to be there."

We referred the question to readers in an online poll. As this page went to press, the results pointed to a hunger for discovery. In the lead, with 29% of the votes, was early childhood, championed by Ann Wroe as a time when "everything is new, unnamed, important, and belongs to us". In second place, with 24%, was Princeton in 1949, chosen by J.M. Ledgard as "the maximum moment of consumption without a sense of an ending". Plus, Einstein was teaching there. In third place, with 14%, was 1690s London; some readers preferred to put the same digits in a different order.

Robert Guest argued for Heian-era Japan, but for all its poetry and licensed promiscuity, only 9% of readers would join him. Slightly fewer would accompany Lucy Kellaway to America, c. 15,000BC – just 8% fancy the life of a female hunter-gatherer. Bringing up the rear was Russia in the late 19th century, which appealed to Arkady Ostrovsky with its fiery politics and great writing. The chance to take tea with Tolstoy (*above*) polled 6% of the vote.

Readers also made their own suggestions. Misty Jean Moore wanted to go into the future to see where her life was heading, which must be the definition of an optimist. But many would opt to stay in the here-and-now, among them Joseph Mellon, who felt the spread of ideas online and today's technological advances added up to "a second enlightenment".

For those who were happy to go back in time, preferences ranged from the understandable to the creative. London in 1966 was picked out as a time of social change and liberation, while Paris and New York in the 1920s were chosen for their glamour and music. Pritikina wanted to return to ancient Greece, "when it meant something to be Greek". Subs opted for the Mughal court of Akbar in 16th-century India, then "the richest empire in the world" and a haven for the arts. China proved popular, particularly under the Tang or Song dynasties when, according to Gregory Kim, China's economy and technology were thriving. Sports lovers were more specific: Rahul Kalia wanted to watch Don Bradman bat, while Roland Haddad chose Mexico, 1970, to see Pelé and his Brazilian team beat Italy 4-1 in the World Cup final.

One theme rang out repeatedly: the wish to live in a time of peace and tolerance, good health, sophisticated dentistry and plentiful food. In early childhood, wrote Ann Wroe, "there's no time...beyond the eternal rhythm set by meals at the breast and the oblivion of sleep". And if your teeth fall out at that age, they grow back again. - GEORGIA GRIMOND

To vote go to moreintelligentlife.com/page/best-time-and-place-to-be-alive. The next Big Question is on page 72

> levels of industrial and agricultural contaminants. There is reliable local knowledge about which cenotes are pure and which are hazardous. Before taking a dip, it's always worth asking whether, for example, there's a pig farm nearby or a large number of car-repair shops. Were tourists to start making a point of asking these questions, municipal and state governments might take more of an interest in the conservation and protection of these ecologically vulnerable attractions.
HUGO DE TORONJA

Canadian capers

Re: The Line of Beauty (Style, November/December)
Pierre Trudeau, Canada's prime minister from 1968 to 1979, wore a cape to a Canadian football game in the 1970s. He was audacious, confident and flamboyant, a real leader who changed the face of our country – characteristics, I believe, required to pull off wearing a cape.
NATASHA HUYER

The maker's marque

Re: Snapshot (Places, November/December)
Just a little wise-guy remark: the car in the photograph of Tuva, Russia, is not a Lada but a Saporoshez.
GERHARD LEHRKE, BERLIN

Nice backhand

I bought *Intelligent Life* [instead of *Front* magazine] because I prefer to be thought of as a twat by those around me than a wanker. And because it's brilliant.
NEIL BENNETT, LONDON (ON TWITTER)

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EXHIBITIONS

Hockney thinks big

The sumptuous, well-groomed galleries of the Royal Academy are about to get grassy. A whiff of Bridlington is coming to Burlington House, with those plush crimson walls soon to be covered in a thick layer of foliage. David Hockney is moving in.

"A Bigger Picture" is the first exhibition in Britain devoted to Hockney's landscapes. The idea came from the RA's 2007 Summer Exhibition when Hockney submitted "Bigger Trees near Warter", a whopping canvas more than 12 metres (40ft) wide. An ordinary subject on a record-breaking scale, it didn't go unnoticed. "He engaged so well with the space, light and sensibility of the gallery," says Edith Devaney, the co-curator and head of the Summer Exhibition, "that we set him a challenge." The result is a mammoth show which unveils three new bodies of work and plenty more. Over the last few years, Hockney has swapped the reliable Californian sun for the seasonal light of Yorkshire. Having rediscovered the British landscape, his work has reached new heights, in more ways than one. He has hired his biggest studio to date and is working more rapidly than seems physically possible at the age of 74. The exhibition documents 50 years of work, but it's the opposite of a retrospective. Once a selection of older work has set the scene, the show looks firmly forwards.

At over six metres wide and nearly three metres tall, "Winter Timber" is a talking point. Like many of Hockney's recent landscapes, it's simple, almost childlike, but pithy and full of life. He has that rare ability to turn the ordinary into something quite extraordinary. "Painting is an old man's game" is his latest soundbite, but this one is doing more than just painting. He is embracing the era of technology and experimenting with new media all the time. He is a great advert for Apple: his iPad has become a sketchbook and over 50 of his drawings on it will be shown here. He has also produced a series of films using 18 cameras displayed on multiple screens. "We get to see the world through Hockney's eyes," says Devaney.

If all goes well, the show could establish Hockney as one of the most important landscape artists of our time. "A Bigger Picture" might make an even bigger splash. - OLIVIA WEINBERG

David Hockney: A Bigger Picture Royal Academy of Arts, London, January 21st to April 9th

EXHIBITIONS AT A GLANCE

Duncan Phyfe, Master Cabinetmaker in New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, December 20th to May 6th). Phyfe, a Scottish New Yorker, was America's leading furniture-maker of the early 19th century. Referred to as the "United States Rage", he showed a crisp simplicity in contrast to the prevailing floweriness. This is his first retrospective in 90 years.

Snapshot: Painters & Photography, Bonnard to Vuillard (Phillips Collection, Washington, February 4th to May 6th). The Kodak hand-held camera was invented in 1888 and we haven't stopped snapping since. Nor did the post-impressionists. With over 200 of their photos on display, this is another Kodak moment.

Akseli Gallen-Kallela: A Passion for Finland (*right*, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, February 7th to May 6th). A pupil of the Académie Julian, Gallen-Kallela spent years in Paris but has never had a solo show in France. His illustrations of "The Kalevala", a Finnish epic, are famous; his paintings are dark, passionate and like no one else's.

Lucian Freud Portraits (National Portrait Gallery, London, February 9th to May 27th). From the Queen to Kate Moss, Francis Bacon to Big Sue, Freud was the most prolific and powerful portraitist of our time. His final work, a massive unfinished nude of his assistant David Dawson, is on show for the first time. A treat.

Carl Larsson (Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki, February 10th to April 29th). Add one more name to the list of Sweden's great exports, from Abba to Ikea. Carl Larsson painted idyllic scenes of domestic life. A skilful colourist and a master of watercolour, he never got the recognition he deserved - except in Finland, which is trying again now.

Picasso and Modern British Art (Tate Britain, London, February 15th to July 15th). Picasso shares the limelight with Britons including Wyndham Lewis, Henry Moore and Graham Sutherland. He's the man who influenced them all, and most other modernists. - OW

'A MÈRE DE L'EMPEREUR' © FINNISH NATIONAL GALLERY

FILM

Love, accurately

"Like Crazy" is one of cinema's most exquisitely accurate representations both of being in love and being in your early 20s. A prize-winner at the Sundance festival, it stars Felicity Jones and Anton Yelchin as two students who fall for each other just before they graduate from a Los Angeles university, only to be separated straight afterwards when Jones's visa problems keep her out of the United States. Can even the most intense relationship survive when the participants are in different time zones, with their own budding careers and separate sets of friends to think about?

"Like Crazy" marks the arrival of a 28-year-old writer-director, Drake Doremus, but it's also a gleaming showcase for its actors, who improvise every line of their dialogue. Jones, in particular, is set to hit the same heights of stardom as her friends Keira Knightley and Carey Mulligan. She has already gathered glowing reviews on stage (Donmar Warehouse), television ("Northanger Abbey" for ITV), and radio ("The Archers"), but on the big screen her disarming emotional directness has been wasted on some flawed projects, from Ricky Gervais's "Cemetery Junction" to Julie Taymor's "The Tempest". Now, with "Like Crazy", she has made a film as vibrant as her performances always are. - NICHOLAS BARBER

Like Crazy British release February 3rd

FILMS AT A GLANCE

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (December 26th). Do we need an American remake of the Swedish hit? Can we accept Rooney Mara, rather than Noomi Rapace, as the tattooed lady? Probably not, but David Fincher is one of the few directors with a chance of improving on the original.

Shame (January 13th). Steve McQueen follows "Hunger" with another abstract noun, and again balances stomach-turning with beauty. Michael Fassbender is stardom incarnate as a sex addict. *See Visual CV, page 118.*

War Horse (January 13th). The film of the play of the book. Two Midas-touch writers, Richard Curtis and Lee Hall, adapt Michael Morpurgo's tale. Spielberg directs his second film in three months; Benedict Cumberbatch, Emily Watson and Tom Hiddleston are among those upstaged by horses.

The Descendants (January 27th). Alexander Payne ("Sideways") returns with another acerbic-kindly study of a man in crisis. George Clooney is unusually vulnerable as the parent who lands a lead role when his wife has a car crash.

Carnage (February 3rd). Trimming the title does little to disguise the stage origins of this bitter farce, but if you didn't see Yasmina Reza's "The God of Carnage" at the theatre, Roman Polanski's film will do fine. Kate Winslet, Jodie Foster and Christoph Waltz play the middle-class Brooklynites venting their bile in more ways than one.

Martha Marcy May Marlene (February 3rd). Disorientating psychological thriller about a woman who escapes from a cult to her sister's lake house. Elizabeth Olsen (*below*) is magnetic.

A Dangerous Method (February 10th). Christopher Hampton scripts a dangerous liaison between Jung (Fassbender again), Freud (Viggo Mortensen) and a hysterical patient (Keira Knightley). Risk-free as David Cronenberg movies go, but there's nothing safe about Knightley's commitment to her role. - NB

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ROCK

Something in the way she moves

"Something" is a vague title for a carefully thought-out record. This is the second album from Chairlift, an art-school duo from Brooklyn comprising Caroline Polachek (*below*) and Patrick Wimberly. It expresses their calculated opposition to what they call "music on steroids". Informed by their backgrounds – Polachek studied art at New York University, and Wimberly learned jazz in Colorado – the pair turn their backs on modern pop's full-throttle production and tinny compression. They have found a third way, which leads back to the roomy recordings of the French new-wavers Indochine and the glossy finish of Eighties chart-toppers like Tears For Fears and A-Ha.

Few would have expected such an accomplished follow-up to Chairlift's cluttered 2008 debut, which reached the mainstream only when a track called "Bruises" featured in an iPod Nano advert. This time they achieve a dazzling coherence by sticking to uniform sounds. "Sidewalk Safari" marries drum machines and handclaps in the line "I'm going to hunt you down", while "I Belong in Your Arms" is an updated "Take on Me", with Polachek's vocal soaring into a galaxy of twinkling synthesisers.

In the three years between albums, Chairlift fell for the formality of Eighties pop and created a visual aesthetic to match. On the video for the single "Amanaemonesia", Polachek pours herself into a green Lycra catsuit and performs a dance routine inspired by Maurice Béjart, which took her three months of intensive ballet training. The result, like the whole album, is both refreshing and compelling. - HAZEL SHEFFIELD

Something released in Europe (Young Turks) January 23rd, in America (Columbia) January 24th

ROCK AT A GLANCE

Lindsey Buckingham (British tour, December 8th-19th). A solo tour from Fleetwood Mac's songwriter-in-chief. Expect dodgy leather jackets, worse guitar solos and deliciously sinuous songs.

Lana del Rey (album, January). This young New Yorker came from nowhere with "Video Games", a tale of modern love with a Dusty Springfield shimmer that was the best ballad of 2011. But when she played live in November, she only had seven other tunes. Can she do it over a whole album?

Leonard Cohen: Old Ideas (album, January 30th). His first new work since the famous tour of 2008. Expect gravel and gems.

Emeli Sandé (album, February). A forceful songwriter for other people, now a fine hitmaker in her own right, like a more ruminative Rihanna. - TIM DE LISLE

GETTY

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CLASSICAL

Charisma, passion and a Soviet intensity

Audiences and orchestras in the West always need a Russian conductor to fall in love with, and the current apple of their eye is the charismatic Vladimir Jurowski. When he takes the helm for a series of concerts entitled "Sergei Prokofiev: Man of the People?" at London's Southbank Centre in January, he will be playing to his strengths. A born communicator, he will be doing for his great compatriot what he has already done for Tchaikovsky and Schnittke, shedding new light on music people thought they knew, but didn't.

Jurowski is one of the last musicians to have done their apprenticeship under the Soviet system, and his intensity can be unnerving. He approaches the canon with a Soviet reverence: he vowed not to conduct Beethoven's Ninth before he was 40 and next May, a month after his 40th birthday, he will conduct it with the London Philharmonic, whose principal conductor he is. Glyndebourne is his other fiefdom, with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic and Russian National Orchestra among his regular ports of call.

After growing up with his parents, siblings and grandmothers in a two-room flat in Moscow, Jurowski followed his conductor father to Germany, where he learned his craft and has settled with his wife and children. Lucidity and passion are the hallmarks of his conducting, and of his forcefully articulate English. If he has a fault, it lies in his defiant championing of joyless new works which would have done better to remain unperformed. Nobody's perfect. - MICHAEL CHURGH

Sergei Prokofiev: Man of the People? Royal Festival Hall, January 13th to February 8th

CLASSICAL AT A GLANCE

The Enchanted Island (Metropolitan Opera, New York, from December 31st). A new work mixing "The Tempest" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream", arias by Handel and Vivaldi, and a libretto by the witty Jeremy Sams. With William Christie conducting, the music should be first-rate.

Méditerranée 2 - Grèce/Turquie (Salle Pleyel, Paris, January 8th). A Turkish and a Greek ensemble combine for a "musical voyage from Constantinople to Istanbul", with Arabic and Balkan Gypsy music threaded into the tapestry.

Awakenings (Barbican, London, January 26th). In a revelatory three-day residency, the Kronos Quartet present a piece inspired by recordings of New York children reacting to 9/11.

Das Rheingold (Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, February 4th). A new production by Andreas Kriegenburg. Kent Nagano conducts a mouthwatering cast.

The Tales of Hoffmann (ENO, London, from February 10th). New take on an old favourite from the provocative Richard Jones. - MC

TALKS

Subcontinent finds the middle of the bat

Winter tours of India and Sri Lanka have long been part of cricketers' lives; now writers are following this migratory pattern. In five years, four major literary festivals have sprung up on the subcontinent, with Jaipur the first to win an international reputation. The season opens at Goa, celebrating 50 years of reunification with India: its focus is 1961, with Amitav Ghosh and Fatima Bhutto among the speakers. Next is Kolkata, centred on the revered and revamped Oxford Bookstore, and focusing on children's books. The Galle Festival – described by Robert McCrum as "a beacon of hope" amid Sri Lanka's political gloom – lures Aminatta Forna, Joanna Trollope and the Nobel nominee Izzeldin Abuelaish to its Lighthouse Hotel and 16th-century fort. Tom Stoppard and Richard Dawkins can be found both here and at Jaipur, where the constellation also includes Ariel Dorfman, Michael Ondaatje, Zoe Heller, Annie Proulx, David Hare, Helen Fielding, Umberto Eco and Steven Pinker. Howzat? - ANTHONY GARDNER

Goa December 17th-21st, Kolkata January 12th-15th, Galle 18th-22nd, Jaipur 20th-24th

TALKS AT A GLANCE

Siobhan Davies (ICA, London, December 15th). The dancer and choreographer discusses static art and leads a tour of the Bloomberg New Contemporaries exhibition.

New York Times Arts and Leisure Weekend (The TimesCenter, New York, January 5th-8th). Room for confusion as the crime queen Patricia Cornwell plugs her new novel and the grunge guru Chris Cornell riffs on life in music. Also on the bill are the bluegrass glamour girl Alison Krauss and Clive Davis, the mogul behind Whitney Houston and Janis Joplin.

Death: A Festival for the Living (Southbank, London, January 27th-29th). Ken Russell, showing his great film on Delius's last years, should be the life and soul of an ingenious weekend. Plus Paul Gambaccini spinning "Desert Island Death Discs", and a new play about Dignitas. - AG

PANOS LEBRECHT ARENA PA.

THEATRE

Making a dance as well as a song

Musicals need movement. No matter how many great songs there are, if everyone stands still while they sing them, you might as well go to the opera. Big dance numbers are vital to this, the lightest of light entertainment; they take the plot, then spin it like floss into fantasy. Never mind the fourth wall – in musicals, the less you believe the better.

So it's perhaps surprising that more classically trained dancers haven't crossed the musical stage. Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly were all hoofers who knew enough about ballet to take what they wanted from it and ignore the rest. But only Cyd Charisse could call herself a ballerina proper – before pinioning Kelly in the man-trap of her thighs in MGM's "Singin' in the Rain", she performed with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Even then, the name tells you all you need to know about how core that corps was.

Today's musicals have one crossover star, though: the former Royal Ballet lead Adam Cooper, who takes the Kelly role in the revival of "Singin' in the Rain" now transferring to the West End from Chichester. Since jumping ship for Matthew Bourne's game-changing, all-male "Swan Lake" in 1995, Cooper has zig-zagged between classical and popular dance, performing and choreographing both the formidable (Romeo for the Scottish Ballet) and the fluffy (Sky Masterson in "Guys and Dolls"). As an actor, he has charm to spare; as a singer, he's a tolerable baritone; but it's as a dancer that he – and, according to reviews, the entire evening – takes off. A man who kicks puddles into rainbows: who would take realism when magic like that is on offer? - ISABEL LLOYD

Singin' in the Rain Palace Theatre, London, from February 4th

THEATRE AT A GLANCE

Stones in His Pockets (Tricycle, London, December 15th to February 4th). This two-hander about an Irish village invaded by a Hollywood film crew won an Olivier when it first appeared at the Tricycle, in 2001. Funny, yes; but also looks deep into the chasm between real Ireland and the one of popular imagination.

Wit (Samuel J. Friedman, New York, from January 5th). Margaret Edson's Pulitzer-winning play from 1999 finally gets its Broadway premiere, with the dolorous Cynthia Nixon, from "Sex in the City", playing a sharp-tongued poetry professor being treated for cancer – and like an idiot.

Constellations (Royal Court Upstairs, London, January 13th to February 11th). Rafe Spall – whose yeasty face can puff into buffoonery one moment and sink back into subtlety the next – takes the lead in Nick Payne's new romance about multiple possible universes. "Sliding Doors" meets "The Sky at Night"?

The Madness of George III (Apollo Theatre, London, January 18th to March 31st). Alan Bennett's study of domesticity and group-think in the Georgian court transfers from Bath, with David Haig (*above*) – a master at playing little men lost in big situations – heart-breaking as the porphyric king.

Hay Fever (Noël Coward, London, February 9th to June 2nd). Four lumpen party guests are befuddled and seduced by their eccentric hosts. Howard Davies directs, setting Lindsay Duncan's glacial precision against the kittenish warmth of Olivia Colman. - IL

THINKING

Staging serendipity

This elegant word has come to mean any happy coincidence. **Ian Leslie** digs up its roots and finds that it actually means something more interesting – and it is in danger from the internet

ONE DAY IN 1945, a man named Percy Spencer was touring one of the laboratories he managed at Raytheon in Waltham, Massachusetts, a supplier of radar technology to the Allied forces. He was standing by a magnetron, a vacuum tube which generates microwaves, to boost the sensitivity of radar, when he felt a strange sensation. Checking his pocket, he found his candy bar had melted. Surprised and intrigued, he sent for a bag of popcorn, and held it up to the magnetron. The popcorn popped. Within a year, Raytheon made a patent application for a microwave oven.

The history of scientific discovery is peppered with breakthroughs that came about by accident. The most momentous was Alexander Fleming's discovery of penicillin in 1928, prompted when he noticed how a mould that floated into his Petri dish killed off the surrounding bacteria. Spencer and Fleming didn't just get lucky. Spencer had the nous and the knowledge to turn his observation into innovation; only an expert on bacteria would have been ready to see the significance of Fleming's stray spore. As Louis Pasteur wrote, "In the field of observation, chance favours only the prepared mind."

The word that best describes this subtle blend of chance and agency is "serendipity". It was coined by Horace Walpole, man of letters and aristocratic dilettante. Writing to a friend in 1754, Walpole explained an unexpected discovery he had just made by reference to a Persian fairy tale, "The Three Princes of Serendip". The princes, he told his correspondent, were "always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of... now do you understand Serendipity?" These days, we tend to associate serendipity with luck, and we neglect the sagacity. But some conditions are more conducive to accidental discovery than others.

Today's world wide web has developed to organise, and make sense of, the exponential increase in information made available to everyone by the digital revolution, and it is amazingly good at doing so. If you are searching for something, you can find it online, and quickly. But a side-effect of this awesome efficiency may be a shrinking, rather than an expansion, of our horizons, because we are less likely to come across things we are not in quest of.

When the internet was new, its early enthusiasts hoped it would emulate the greatest serendipity machine ever invented: the city. The modern metropolis, as it arose in the 19th century, was also an attempt to organise an exponential increase, this one in population. Artists and writers saw it as a giant playground of discovery, teeming with surprise encounters. The flâneur was born: one who wanders the streets with purpose, but without a map.

Most city-dwellers aren't flâneurs, however. In 1952 a French sociologist called Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe asked a student to keep a journal of her daily movements. When he mapped her paths onto a map of Paris he saw the emergence of a triangle, with vertices at her apartment, her university and the home of her piano teacher. Her movements, he said, illustrated "the narrowness of the real Paris in which each individual lives".

We tend to associate serendipity with luck, and we neglect the sagacity

To some degree, the hopes of the internet's pioneers have been fulfilled. You type "squid" into a search engine, you land on the Wikipedia page about squid, and in no time you are reading about Jules Verne and Pliny. But most of us use the web in the manner of that Parisian student. We have our paths, our bookmarks and our feeds, and we stick closely to them. We no longer "surf" the information superhighway, as it has become too vast to cruise without a map. And as it has evolved, it has become better and better at ensuring we need never stray from our virtual triangles.

Google can answer almost anything you ask it, but it can't tell you what you ought to be asking. Ethan Zuckerman, director of the Centre for Civic Media at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a

ILLUSTRATION **BRETT RYDER**

long-time evangelist for the internet, points out that it doesn't match the ability of the printed media to bring you information you didn't know you wanted to know. He calls the front page of a newspaper a "discovery engine": the lead story tells you something you're almost certain to be interested in – the imminent collapse of the global economy, or Lady Gaga's latest choice of outfit – and elsewhere on the page you learn that revolution has broken out in a country of whose existence you were barely aware. Editors with an eye for such things, what Zuckerman calls "curators", are being superseded by "friends" – people like you, who probably already share your interests and world view – delivered by Facebook. Twitter is better at leading us to the interests of people beyond our social circle, but our tendency to associate with others who think in similar ways – what sociologists call our "value homophily" – means most of us end up with a feed that feels like an extended dinner party.

One reason why television viewing has held up relatively well, defying predictions of its demise, is that, compared with the internet, it is good at serendipity. Danny Cohen is in charge of BBC1, Britain's most-viewed channel. He told me that a new programme on a difficult or obscure subject can still inherit a substantial audience from a popular show. This is, in some ways, a mysterious phenomenon. "I could understand it when changing the channel meant getting off the sofa," says Cohen. "But now?" Despite remote controls and far more channels, we still willingly succumb to the choices of the broadcasting curators.

Cohen worries that even as the volume of media has grown exponentially, "our propensity to explore it is diminishing". Driven by the needs of advertis- >

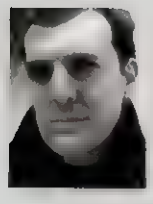
> ers keen to hit ever more tightly delineated targets, today's internet plies us with "relevant" information and screens out the rest. Two different people will receive subtly different results from Google, adjusted for what Google knows about their interests. Newspaper websites are starting to make stories more prominent to you if your friends have liked them on Facebook. We spend our online lives inside what the writer Eli Pariser calls "the filter bubble".

To escape it, we can leave our screens and walk outside. But some of our most serendipitous spaces are under threat from the internet. Wander into a bookshop in search of something to read: the book jackets shimmer on the table, the spines flirt with you from the shelves. You can pick them up and allow their pages to caress your hands. You may not find the book you wanted, but you will walk out with three you didn't. Amazon will have your book too, but its recommendation engine doesn't even come close to delivering the same stimuli. Similarly, a librarian isn't as efficient as a search engine, his memory isn't nearly as capacious, but he may still be better at making suggestions to a reader in search of – well, something.

But there is a reason why Amazon is successful and bookshops are closing: in a world of infinite choice, efficiency is hard to resist. The pleasures of the bookshop or the library are easily outgunned by the knowledge that we can order or download a book instantly, or find the information we're looking for within seconds. Serendipity, on the other hand, is, as Zuckerman says, "necessarily inefficient". It is a fragile quality, vulnerable to our desire for convenience and speed. It also requires a kind of planned vagueness. Digital systems don't do vagueness very well, and our patience with it seems to be fading.

Google's aim is to organise the world's information and democratise access to it. But when everyone can get the same information in more or less the same way, it becomes harder to be original; innovation thrives on the serendipitous collision of ideas. Zuckerman told me about a speech on serendipity he recently gave to an audience of investment managers. As he started on his theme he feared he might lose their attention, but he was pleasantly surprised to find that they hung on every word. It soon became clear why. "In finance, everyone reads Bloomberg, so everyone sees the same information." Zuckerman said. "What they're looking for are strategies for finding inspiration from outside the information orbit."

The internet has become so good at meeting our desires that we spend less time discovering new ones. To update the Rolling Stones, you can always get what you want. But you may not get what you need. ■

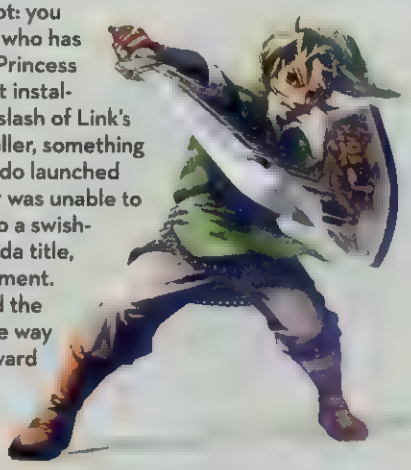


Tom Standage

A game, a gadget and an app

Rescue Zelda with superior swordplay, then curl up with a good e-book

A GAME THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SKYWARD SWORD

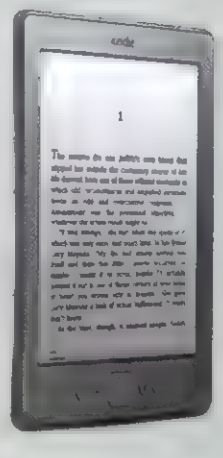


Every Zelda game has essentially the same plot: you play Link, a sword-wielding boy in green garb, who has to solve puzzles, defeat bad guys and rescue Princess Zelda. The added twist in the franchise's latest instalment is the ability to control every swing and slash of Link's sword using the Wii's wand-like motion controller, something Zelda fans have been waiting for since Nintendo launched the Wii five years ago. Back then its controller was unable to support direct mapping of its movements onto a swishing on-screen sword, making the Wii's first Zelda title, "Twilight Princess", something of a disappointment. Since then, however, Nintendo has introduced the improved "MotionPlus" controller, opening the way to proper swordplay, and more besides. "Skyward Sword" has been built specifically for the new controller, which serves as a sword, butterfly net and whip, among other things. Combat is a much more subtle affair, with some baddies vulnerable only to slashes in particular directions. All this adds some refreshing new elements to the usual Zelda formula. Link and Zelda took their time to arrive on the Wii properly, and the Wii is now showing its age: its successor, the Wii U, is due in 2012. But "Skyward Sword" was worth the wait.

The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword on Wii only: £48 (with MotionPlus controller) or £35 (game only)

A GADGET THE NEW KINDLE

This has been a breakthrough year for electronic books, with Amazon's Kindle e-reader leading the pack. The original Kindle, launched in 2007, looked rather clunky, but subsequent models have refined the design and the latest version – called, rather unhelpfully, the new Kindle – is the best yet. It does away with the keyboard found on previous models, making it small and light enough to fit into a coat pocket. The paper-like screen is also improved, with better contrast, faster response and the annoying "blink" effect when you turn the page greatly reduced. Books are swiftly downloaded over Wi-Fi, with no computer required. The Kindle is light enough to hold in one hand for long periods, unlike certain tablet computers I could mention. The battery seems to last for ever. And the lack of support for e-mail, Twitter and "Angry Birds" means there are no distractions to come between you and the text. If you've been waiting to make the leap to e-reading, now's the time, and this is the device.



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Simon Hopkinson *Stove Notes*

A dusting of paprika, a spoonful of sour cream, and a little tomato: beef stroganoff gets a makeover

Mr and Mrs Stirling, at whose restaurant The Hat and Feather, in Knutsford, Cheshire, I cooked for a few months in the early 1970s, always relied upon Robert Carrier's recipe for beef stroganoff. I was bewildered by it. I had spent the previous year in another establishment working from an entirely French repertoire. Steak au poivre, côte de bœuf with sauce béarnaise, entrecôte marchand de vin – these I had all cooked; but never a dish of beef with soured cream. What on earth was soured cream, anyway?

Essentially, Carrier's recipe instructed you to sautée thin strips of seasoned beef fillet in butter in a heavy skillet until lightly browned, but still very rare. You'd put this to one side, add a touch more butter to the pan, and gently fry thinly sliced onions and button mushrooms until they were golden. The beef was then returned to the pan, where I'd sprinkle over a healthy dash of sweet paprika, and toss the beef, onions and mushrooms vigorously together until they were well mixed.

To finish, I'd quickly stir in two or three generous spoonfuls of soured cream; this novel ingredient was so delicious that some usually went in my mouth as well. It was crucial the cream didn't boil, or it would curdle, so I just mingled the assembly until the meat was coated luxuriously, before doing a final quick taste for salt. Naturally, in those heady days of exciting garnishes, the dish went out to the dining room strewn with chopped parsley.

Being the thrifty restaurateurs the Stirlings most surely were, they bought good-value fillet "tails" from the local butcher, who collected them over a period of time, froze them, and then alerted Mrs Stirling when he had enough for a couple of weeks of "strog". This butcher's leftover remains the best cut to use for Carrier's method. But recently it occurred to me that a short, braised stroganoff may also work well, using tomatoes and another, more flavoursome cut of beef unfamiliar in Britain until recently: *onglet*. (This is the French name, but here it is often called skirt steak; the Americans refer to it as hanger.)

I recall seeing recipes for such a thing over the years. The one ingredient I clearly remembered from those older, gentler versions of beef strog was tomato purée: an ingredient vital to many stews and casseroles of the 1960s and 1970s. This ubiquitous paste was almost impossible to avoid: you'd find it everywhere from Hungarian goulash to Italian ways with chicken. And all were always far too red, victims of purée overkill – usually as a result of it not having been cooked-out in oil or butter, which neutralises the raw taste.

Not surprisingly, this purée didn't appeal as part of my updated braise. Instead, some peeled and chopped fresh tomatoes would, I thought, be ideal. Sliced onions would remain, and a scrap of garlic wouldn't go amiss, either. To add extra depth of flavour, I planned to replace the blander, cultivated button mushrooms with a healthy handful of pre-soaked dried porcini. I'd still use paprika, though more than before, and also add some dill, a popular herb in Slavic cooking, where stroganoff has its origins.

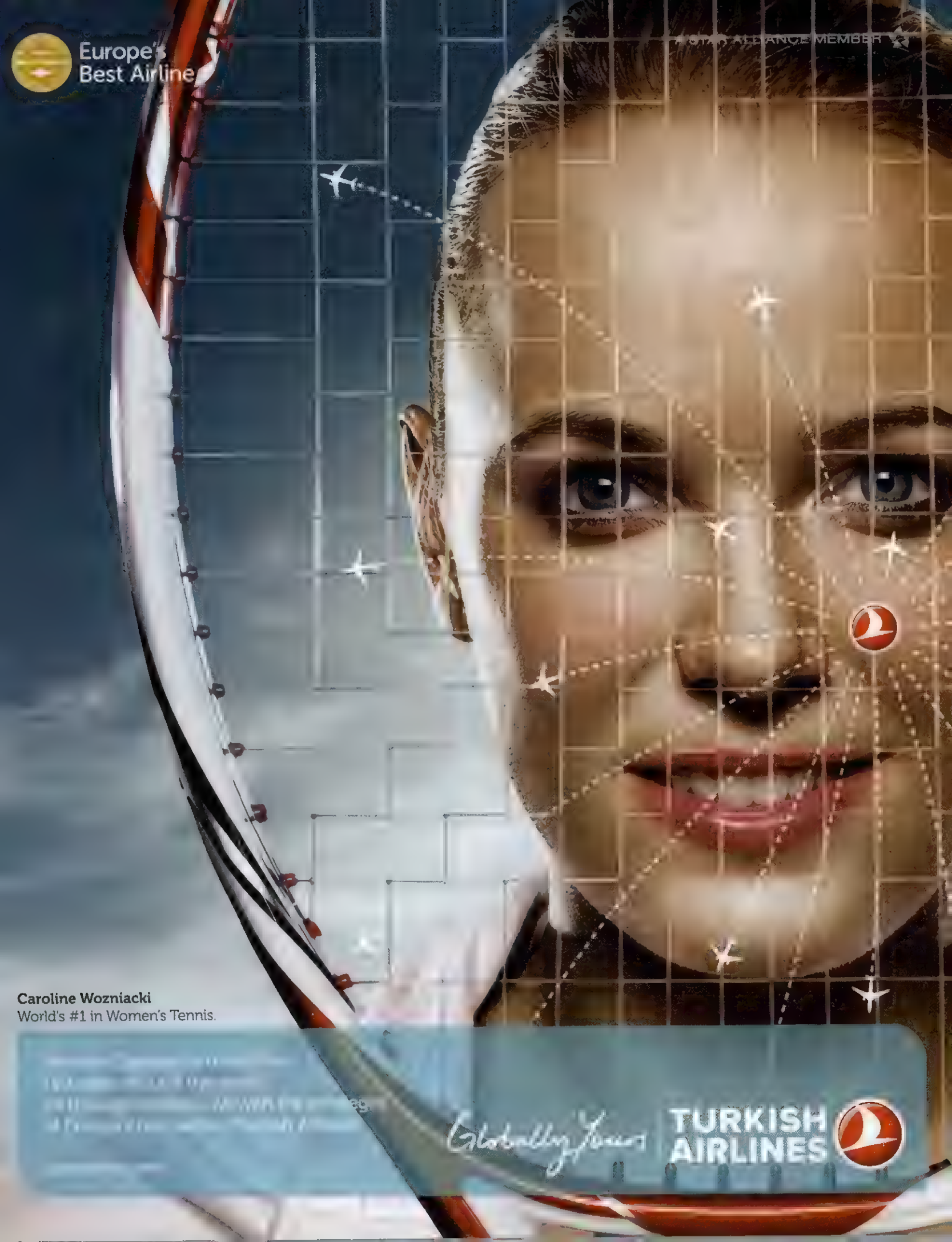
To make the dish for two, I slowly fried a couple of sliced onions and a little garlic in beef dripping or oil, then added about 400g of beef, cut into largeish pieces. I coloured these a bit, and then stirred in a couple of teaspoons of paprika, salt and pepper, two to three chopped tomatoes and the drained porcini. I let it stew over a very low heat for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, before tipping in the porcini liquid and a couple of teaspoons of dried dill. Then it simmered very, very quietly, uncovered, for about an hour.

To finish, I decanted the contents of the pan into a heated dish. I loosened and thinned a small pot of soured cream with a touch of hot milk, then spooned it over the stroganoff, swirling it into the juices and allowing it to sink between the meat. A deft dusting of paprika over the surface prettied the thing. Plainly boiled, buttered potatoes were the only accompaniment needed. ■

SHOPPING LIST

Tails These are the thin, tapering end of beef fillet – ask your butcher to cut some for you, the next time you are in the mood for some 1970s exotica.
Onglet This cut hangs below the diaphragm; a good butcher should be able to furnish you with some, given due notice, but ask to have the central, sinewy strip removed.
Sweet paprika I use El Avion sweet paprika (or *pimentón dulce*) from Spain, which has a paler colour than Hungarian paprika. It's available at good delis, Spanish food shops and some supermarkets.
Dill If fresh is out of season, Bart's jars of freeze-dried dill tops are widely available and very good. – SH

ILLUSTRATION **CATH RILEY**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DRINK

Moonlight hops

Who needs a brewery? Not the new breed of so-called gypsy brewers who are shaking up the beer world. Simon Wright meets some of them

SEEKING OUT THE best bars in a foreign city is a hit-and-miss affair – unless you are fortunate enough to have fallen in with a couple of members of the British Guild of Beer Writers. Which is exactly what happened to me on a recent trip to Copenhagen, where Carlsberg was unveiling its new worldwide marketing campaign. After a lavish dinner in Carlsberg's vast art gallery, the journalists suggested heading off for something a little less mass-market.

In days gone by this might have worried me. British beer-lovers once had a well-earned reputation for eschewing anything remotely modern, preferring beards, beer guts and a mandatory interest in folk-dancing. A glance at our party confirmed that things have changed. I was the only one with both beard and belly, and no one mentioned Morris men.

The venue they chose – Mikkeller bar – is almost in the shadow of Carlsberg's towering head office. Small and simple, it's filled with young men wearing architect's glasses and feels quite unlike a run-of-the-mill beer dive. No wonder: it belongs to a new and radically different sort of beer-maker.

The long row of taps behind the bar dispenses ales brewed, in tiny quantities, by the owner, Mikkel Borg Bjergso, and they have a taste far removed from the globalised, gassy stuff so ruthlessly marketed by Carlsberg. Bjergso is one of a small but growing band of "gypsy" brewers, an itinerant group who don't trouble themselves with the cost (and other headaches) of owning breweries of their own. Instead they just rent or borrow time in existing small breweries – a couple of days for the brewing, and maybe a few weeks for the beer to mature.

As Bjergso, who started his venture in 2006, points out, this gives gypsy brewers an advantage over even the most innovative microbrewery, which might need to sell plenty of pints to repay big loans. Instead, he can afford to experiment: the small stakes mean he and his kind can take bigger gambles with niche flavours, or ales of a strength that even the braver microbrewers might think a little too potent.

The end results are small batches of adventurous brews with complex characters and powerful flavours: anything from the wonderful, traditional pilsener "Czechet", to "Beer Geek Bacon", flavoured with smoked malt and coffee (though at 7.5% alcohol you might not want to have it for breakfast).

This exclusivity brings premium prices: Bjergso's wares are sold at a couple of London bars, but they are more than double the price of a typical West End pint. If you can stomach the prices, it's well worth trying to track down a gypsy brew or two – and it's getting easier, as other beermakers are following in Bjergso's wake. On the west coast of America, two enthusiastic San Franciscans have founded the Local Brewing Company, knocking out porters, stouts and IPAs, while Almanac Beer, also in San Francisco, makes small runs of beers using local, seasonal flavourings. Dann Paquette, an affable American who, with his English wife, runs the gypsy brewer Pretty Things in Sommerville, Massachusetts, reckons that he spent $9,000 on his first batch of beer. If he had never made another drop, he could have quit in profit. Happily, he »

Brewers' group
FROM LEFT Stillwater's "crisp, hoppy" Stateside Saison, Mikkeller's "wonderful, traditional" Czechet pilsener, and Pretty Things' "light, floral" Jack D'Or

PHOTOGRAPH MILO REID

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> is still in business. Jack D'Or, his flagship brew, is a light, floral treat inspired by traditional Belgian farmhouse saison beers.

Down in Maryland, Brian Strumke of Stillwater Artisanal Ales is a friendly, enthusiastic brewer with an unexpected back story: he spent five years touring Europe as a DJ pumping out dance music to ecstatic crowds, which left him with a taste for European beers and for life on the road. He began home-brewing and, like Bjergso, discovered he was rather good at it. As a gypsy brewer, he says wistfully, he can keep up something of the wandering lifestyle he loved as a DJ.

Strumke produces just 2,000 barrels a year (American "craft" brewers are allowed to make up to 6m barrels a year), but dedicated beer-lovers can track down his superb brews in a few bars along the east coast and in Europe. It is worth the hunt: in a recent survey of the world's best new breweries, ratebeer.com ranked Stillwater in second place. A mouthful of its "Stateside Saison" reveals a light ale with a complex aroma of fresh summer fruits and a crisp hoppy taste. The artistry doesn't end there – the labels feature some elaborate artwork and look, to my untrained eye, like upmarket tattoos.

According to Pete Brown, a British beer writer, it's the "passion for experimentation" of small brewers, alongside a more open-minded attitude in drinkers, that has allowed gypsy brewers to thrive. Their globe-trotting means they cross-fertilise national brewing traditions; and their cutting-edge products are influencing brewers the next step up the ladder.

Last year Bjergso collaborated on a beer with Brewdog, a relatively new Scottish craft brewer that has already got its wares on the shelves of British supermarket chains, including Morrisons and Tesco. By making what it describes as "uncompromising, bold and irreverent" brews, Brewdog acknowledges the debt it owes to Bjergso and his like. And the world's leading brewers are starting to take note. While beer drinking as a whole is either flat or declining in the West, niche beer is expanding. Rather than making these beers themselves, big brewers are covering the territory by buying small brewers instead: in 2011, AB InBev, the world's biggest with 20% of the global market, bought Goose Island, a Chicago craft brewer with an inventive roster of ales.

Some of these beers go beyond inventive, into wacky. Among Bjergso's 76 launches last year were beers flavoured with rhubarb, chocolate and chillies. I have recoiled from a first sip of some of them: but only in shock, tasting something so different from the dull lagers most of us are used to. So, gypsy brews aren't for everyone. But that's rather the point. ■

Tim Atkin

The wine-list inspector

Italian restaurants in New York: Del Posto stands out for wine, food and theatre

With its long cocktail bar, high ceilings and candle-lit staircase, Del Posto is as stylish an Italian restaurant as you'll find in New York. It opened only six years ago, but this ambitious project in the Meatpacking District feels much more established than that. It's smart and jazzy, but relaxed too.

Its owner, Joe Bastianich, was born into the New York food-and-wine world (his mother, Lidia, created Felidia on the East Side), but has developed extensive business interests of his own, including 20 restaurants, cookbooks and three wineries in Italy.

The creative, flavoursome food at Del Posto deserves the praise it has received. But what about the wines? The aim is to showcase "the most complete Italian wine list in the world", but have Bastianich and his wine director, Jeff Porter, succeeded? After a Negroni at the bar, we sat down to find out.

Most customers buy their wine by the bottle, leaning towards classics such as Barolo, Amarone and Brunello di Montalcino, but I wanted to test Porter's skills. We chose the $115 five-course menu and opted to pay an additional $95 each for five glasses picked by him. Some of these came from the list of 40 wines by the glass, but others were opened to match a specific dish.

The diversity was impressive. We had ten different wines from sources as varied as Friuli, Trentino, the Abruzzi, Puglia, the Maremma, the Marche and the Veneto. Some of the choices were daring: a cherry, stone-fruity Sicilian Cerasuolo with halibut, a sparkling, dry Balter Trento Brut with a bitter herb and lettuce salad, and Maculan's fresh, orange peel-scented Dindarello Moscato with a fig and celery sorbet. Others were more classic.

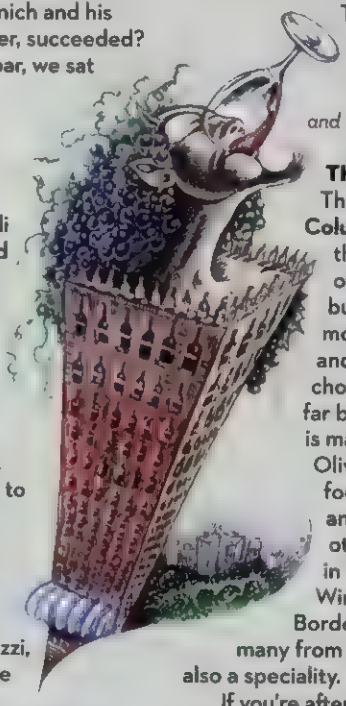
One of the red wines clashed – and was replaced immediately – but Porter never stopped challenging us with different aromas, flavours and textures. His enthusiasm and knowledge added to the sense of theatre, as did the ever-changing array of glasses.

The rest of the list has depth as well as breadth, covering all of Italy's 20 regions. Any restaurant that can boast 13 vintages of Giacomo Conterno's brilliant Monfortino Barolo, dating back to 1939, or eight of Antinori's Solaia, means business. There is an impressive number of smaller and larger formats, too, right up to a series of Texan-style, six-litre Imperials.

Some of the top names aren't cheap – this is one of Manhattan's best restaurants, after all – but there are enough wines by the glass, as well as bottles under $75, to keep (relative) bargain-hunters happy. The cellars alongside and beneath the restaurant are cool and well-stocked, and the wines match the style of the food.

There aren't many Italian restaurants this good, even in Italy.

$210pp for five courses and wine; delposto.com



THE COMPETITION

The best thing at **A Voce Columbus** is arguably the third-floor view over Central Park, but Missy Robbins's modern Italian food and an extensive, well-chosen wine list are not far behind. The selection is made by a Frenchman, Olivier Flosse, and its focus is on Piedmont and Tuscany, with other Italian regions in the background. Wines from Burgundy, Bordeaux and California, many from top producers, are also a speciality.

If you're after something more traditional and homespun, head out to **Manducatis** in Queens, where Vincenzo and Ida Cerbone have been serving hearty Italian cuisine since 1977. Frustratingly, their wine list is classified in alphabetical order rather than by region or style, but do persist, because there are well-priced treasures among the selection of more than 400 Italian wines, some dating back to the 1970s. Their son Anthony holds the key to the cellar and gives good advice.

avocerestaurant.com; manducatis.com

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HEALTH

Save the last dance for me

It's not easy keeping fit when you're 82 and your knees squeak when you go upstairs. But **Irving Wardle** has found a way: Zumba

IT WAS AN ad in the local paper that did it. It promised easy-going classes for the over-60s which would guarantee heightened energy and all-round well-being. Although they went by the passion-killing name of Prime Time, I signed up for the classes and became addicted on the spot. I liked the instructors. I liked the exercises, and all went well for a few years until the week when, to my dismay, Prime Time vanished from the timetable.

I should have seen this coming. Our numbers were in decline. What had been a boisterous roomful of 20 old ladies and me had shrunk to a defiant last stand of four or five old ladies and me. Big Sheila had been claimed by her grandchildren. Betty had to look after her sick husband. Chubby Barbara had died of cancer. Other men seldom came near the class, preferring to torture their biceps and glutes with pieces of machinery, or sit in the locker room ranting on about football. My impression was that the women came to the gym to do themselves a bit of good, whereas for the men it was somewhere to escape to.

The crunch arrived at a session when our hitherto undeflatable instructor, Pam, found herself alone with me, practising salsa steps for a full hour. That took the wind out of her. Too late, the others rallied for a final stand against the management: but the axe had fallen, and when Pam's next class came around, Prime Time had given way to Zumba.

The average age in the new class was 35. It contained girls displaying intricate butterfly tattoos, wielding their hips like trip-hammers, and capable of changing from a herd of charging rhinos to a flight of migrating birds. The survivors of the Prime Time gang took one look at them and fled. For some reason, I did not follow them.

At 82 I was older than any of the old ladies; and every time I came to the gym I had to haul myself up the stairs to the reception desk with my knees cracking and popping like a xylophone band. But, once I got on the studio floor, it was as if I'd shed 20 years. I couldn't bounce; but everything else – grapevine, boxstep, mamba, up-and-over, cha-cha, repeater, curl, pony, half-jack and the whole aerobic box of tricks – I could still manage, and even enjoy. So why not stick around and see what else I might be able to do?

Zumba, I later discovered, was the invention of a Colombian fitness instructor who once turned up for a class without his aerobics music, and so made up a random session from the CDs he happened to have in his car. Not unlike Charles Lamb's account of the origin of roast pig, this accident awakened an appetite that spread round the planet (125 countries by the latest Google-count). Unlike salsa, the previous dance epidemic, it's a terpsichorean mongrel made up from elements of merengue, cumbia, reggaeton, mambo,

PHOTOGRAPHS **HANNAH MAULEF FINCH**

flamenco and other dances I'd never heard of. I still couldn't identify them, but I know how to move when your roof is on fire, or with one leg shackled to a ball and chain, or how to cut sugar cane with an invisible machete. You wind up sweaty and it's exhilarating.

Mongrel though Zumba may be, it feels authentic in a way aerobics never does; and the music is a distinct cut above "In the Mood" and "Pump it up, ya gotta pump it up". According to the playwright Dario Fo, dance has a history of being taken from work routines – usually meaning the rich stealing their culture from the poor, as in the transformation of a gondolier's rocking footwork into the stately advance and retreat of a Pavane. In Zumba you feel closer to the point of origin, with steps mimicking the shaking, dragging, digging and cutting movements of chain gangs and field workers. Peasant actions go on into old age, which is good news for those with squeaking joints as it means you get more stamping and less bouncing.

Dance has a history of being taken from work routines

Back in my bouncing days, I went to Yat Malmgren's Laban classes in the 1960s, and it was all girls even then. Most of them were drama-school beauties who made me acutely conscious of my mediocre physique. Geriatric Zumba is a big improvement on that. With Yat, I felt confident only when exercising flat on my back. Now I can travel fearlessly across the floor. What I've enjoyed most about being old is this discovery: that looking good is nothing compared with the pleasure of still being able to put one foot in front of the other and move. ■

CARS

Three wheels good

After 100 years, Morgan is building three-wheelers again – complete with a bulletproof gearbox. **Paul Markillie** is pleasantly surprised

PUTTING ON BIGGLES goggles seems a bit silly. But the cockpit is open, the windscreen is tiny and a fly in the eye will make you cry. Being so exposed is not the only reason this could be hair-raising. The little car resembles a Star Wars pod racer and the shark jaws painted on its side suggest it might bite. The engine growls menacingly after being fired up by pressing a button which usually serves as the bomb-release on a Eurofighter. The really worrying thing is what is not there: one of the wheels. "No one else would dare do this," Charles Morgan says, and the touch of hype is well earned. He is talking about putting a three-wheeler into production that looks like the one his grandfather made when he started the Morgan car company in 1910.

I had never driven a three-wheeler, or wanted to. Del Boy's Reliant Regal in "Only Fools and Horses" always seemed to be about to roll over on corners. But the Regal is a sloth with one wheel in front. The new Morgan 3 Wheeler, good for about 190kph (120mph), has two wheels in front and a single, rather fat one behind. This, as I discover taking corners ever faster, is a surprisingly stable arrangement.

For some reason the 3 Wheeler is best driven

ILLUSTRATION **NICK HARDCASTLE**

looking slightly along one side, rather as you might lean out of the cockpit of a Tiger Moth for a better view. It lets you keep the front wheels in sight and position them exactly where you want. A couple of bikers nod approvingly. They probably recognise the s&s chrome-plated two-litre v-2 engine stuck on the front – a motor also used on customised Harley Davidsons. The noise it makes turns plenty of heads. The gearbox comes from a Mazda MX-5, and is bullet-proof. The car itself is built on a tubular-steel chassis with a body made from handcrafted ash and aluminium. This is typical Morgan: blending old with new to give the looks of a classic but without any ancient bits to go wrong or fall off. The 3 Wheeler is light, agile and gives a sense of speed that is highly exaggerated because the driver sits so low down. The effect is thrilling.

Charles Morgan knew this would happen. "It's like a toy cupboard," he says when we meet among the cluster of workshops where Morgans are made in the foothills in Malvern. "And the best bit is taking the toys out." Modern cars have a sophistication that makes them easy to drive, but at the cost of coddling the driver, insulating us from the road. That may be what most people want, but for Morgan it makes for boring cars. "It is behind the wheel where you get the pleasure of driving, and that has been lost in modern cars with all their technology and increased weight." Enough people have been in agreement to keep the family business going by placing orders – 600 alone for the 3 Wheeler, even before it went into production.

Most family firms don't make it to the third generation, and Morgan has had its share of troubles. In the early 1990s the late Sir John Harvey-Jones, in his television series "Troubleshooter", told Charles Morgan and his late father Peter, then managing director, that the firm would be bankrupt in five years if they did not boost output beyond 400 cars a year and modernise production. The advice was famously ignored – or at least it seemed to be. "That's television for you," says Morgan. "But he was right, we had to become more efficient."

Morgan knows about television. Before joining the family firm full-time in 1985, he was a cameraman for ITN, working in many hot spots, including Afghanistan. "It was the best time to be doing that job," he feels, because in those days a press card would let you visit both sides of a war on the same day. But cars were never far away and when not filming he was racing Morgans. Back then, a small, specialist carmaker could "race on Sunday, sell on Monday". But manufacturing was changing, becoming more complex, with regulations that were ever more Byzantine – especially to sell cars overseas. Even though "Troubleshooter" helped to win the firm more orders with its exposure, Morgan decided he needed new skills to prepare for the future. So he did an MBA in manufacturing management and eventually took over the reins in 2005.

Outwardly the Morgan factory still seems archaic with men bending aluminium, carpenters sanding wood and cars being pushed from one workshop to another. But some of that aluminium is "superformed" in a high-tech process used by the aerospace industry; and wood, used well, is still hard to beat in structural engineering, besides looking rather elegant. The boss, who has a handkerchief billowing from the top pocket of his sports jacket, is constantly busy, greeting suppliers, customers and chatting to some of his 185 staff.

Morgan has brought in young designers and engineers who are respectful of the heritage, but eager to give Morgan cars a new look (see box). Although the company still makes its classic range of 1930s-style sports cars, for which demand is steady, its Aero models are an altogether different breed with striking Gothic looks and supercar status. Morgan smiles approvingly at a photo on the wall of an Aero leading a pack of Porsches around a racetrack: "If you are passionate about cars, this is perfect."

Morgans are partly bespoke. Customers visit the factory to see their cars being built and tell the workforce how they would like things done. With the addition of the 3 Wheeler, production is now exceeding 1,000 cars a year. There is still a waiting list, of about a year, so the numbers are a balance between meeting demand and retaining exclusivity. The task now is to produce new models, incorporating technologies like electric and hybrid engines, but retaining the whiff of a unique history. Morgan's excitement about what is possible is irrepressible – however many wheels it has. ■

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Morgan 3 Wheeler
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Morgan Aero SuperSports
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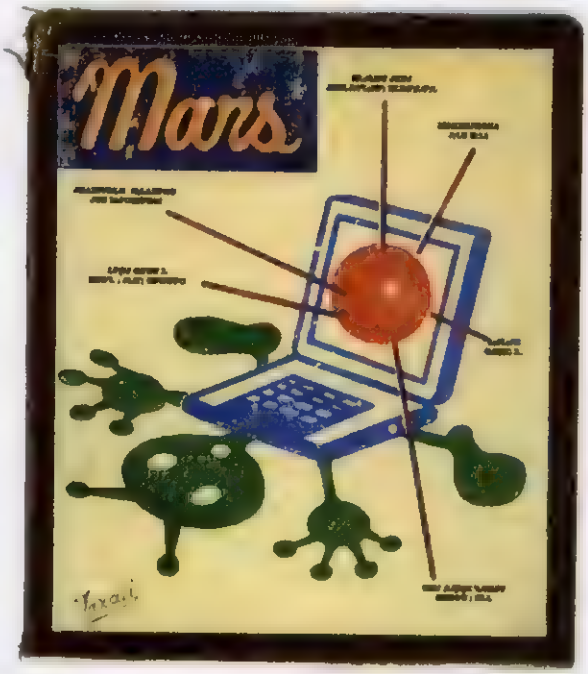
Morgan EvaGT
Light, quick and stylish. Still in development, but a sniff of things to come

Oliver Morton *The Music of Science*

Once just a red lump, Mars is now mapped to the metre: a set of diverse places, and a new frontier

It is a desert plain, caramel-smooth and windswept-empty. To its north rises a mountain taller than Mont Blanc, Mount Rainier or Fuji-san and though, because it is also wider, its sides are less steep and prospects less dramatic, it is still an impressive thing. A massive central shoulder, banded with rocks of different ages, juts out over the plain; to its side, the mountain's forest-free flanks are cut with canyons. The summit – whittled away by the wind but a stranger to snow – sits farther back, hidden from view. Both plain and mountain are ringed by a wall four kilometres high and almost 500 kilometres long, the rim of a crater the size of Wales. Above the landscape is a washed-out, alien sky. At the right time of year, the Earth hangs over that horizon-rim at twilight, a blueish evening star.



This is Gale crater, a part of Mars with which some of the inhabitants of that evening star have made an appointment. As this page went to press in late November, a six-wheeled rover called *Curiosity* was due to be thrown there by a 500-tonne Atlas V rocket. If all goes well – a substantial if, as Mars missions often don't; a Russian one failed to get beyond Earth's orbit in early November – then next August a complex system of parachutes and retrorockets will lower the rover through the thin Martian atmosphere to its destination. It will trundle across the plain to the ancient rocks of the mountain's base and start a slow ascent. It will sniff the air and take samples of rock and soil to analyse in its on-board laboratory. With the help of an orbiting intermediary, it will send back to Earth a torrent of pictures, from the panoramic to the microscopic.

Curiosity's climb up that still unnamed mountain promises an extraordinary return in terms of science (and with a price tag of over $2 billion, so it should). It also opens up a new era of exploration – so new, in fact, that it may no longer be exploration at all.

The Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, the well-named flagship of the small flotilla of satellites now orbiting the planet, boasts a camera on a par with those of Earth's best spy satellites, able to pick out rocks the size of footballs on the surface below it. Since Gale made the shortlist of possible landing sites for *Curiosity*, that camera has devoted a lot of time and many megabytes to the crater. When I wrote a book called "Mapping Mars", a decade ago, one of its centrepieces was the unveiling of a three-dimensional map of Mars better than anything ever seen before. The maps of Gale crater available today have more data in them than that state-of-the-art map used to model the whole world. Draped over the topography is data from other instruments that have studied Gale by day and by night in wavelengths both visible and invisible.

Unlike earlier spacecraft, then, *Curiosity* is not going into the unknown. It is going to somewhere mapped to the last metre. Its investigations of sediments that carry the mineralogical signatures of earlier, wetter periods in Mars's history – sediments known to be there thanks to spectral analysis by instruments on the satellites orbiting above it, sediments that led to the choice of Gale rather than any of the thousands of other potential sites that *Curiosity* could reach – may prove remarkable. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that they may reveal signs of long-gone life. But *Curiosity* will never round a corner and reveal a vista unexpected by the scientists monitoring its progress. Its data may surprise; its otherworldly surroundings will not. Every line of sight can be presimulated, every track will be the subject of computerised premonition hundreds of millions of kilometres away.

Space flight and science both draw on the imagery of the frontier, that limitless source of new possibility which America believed itself to have lost at the end of its expansionist 19th century, and has hearkened back to, one way or another, ever since. Mars, the only other planet in the solar system on which people might plausibly live, and one with landscapes reminiscent of a Brobdingnagian Arizona to boot, brings those strands of frontier imagery together in spectacular fashion. To think of it now as a place so well known that, while it can offer new knowledge, it promises no new vistas, feels a bit like the passing of an age. It makes the adventure more purely one of the intellect, shifting its emphasis to the unfathomable gulfs in time – *Curiosity* will scrape and zap rocks that are almost 4 billion years old – rather than the conquered vastness of space.

But if the planet next door is losing some idealised mystique, it is gaining something, too. Gale may be too well mapped to be surprising. But it can still be inhabited, if only virtually. *Curiosity* will make it a setting for travel and stories and setbacks – a real place, not just a vision or an idea of another world. The loss of strangeness, looked at another way, is an expansion of the shared human experience to another planet. Mars is not diminished by becoming ever better known. Earth is ennobled. ■

ILLUSTRATION **GARY TAXALI**

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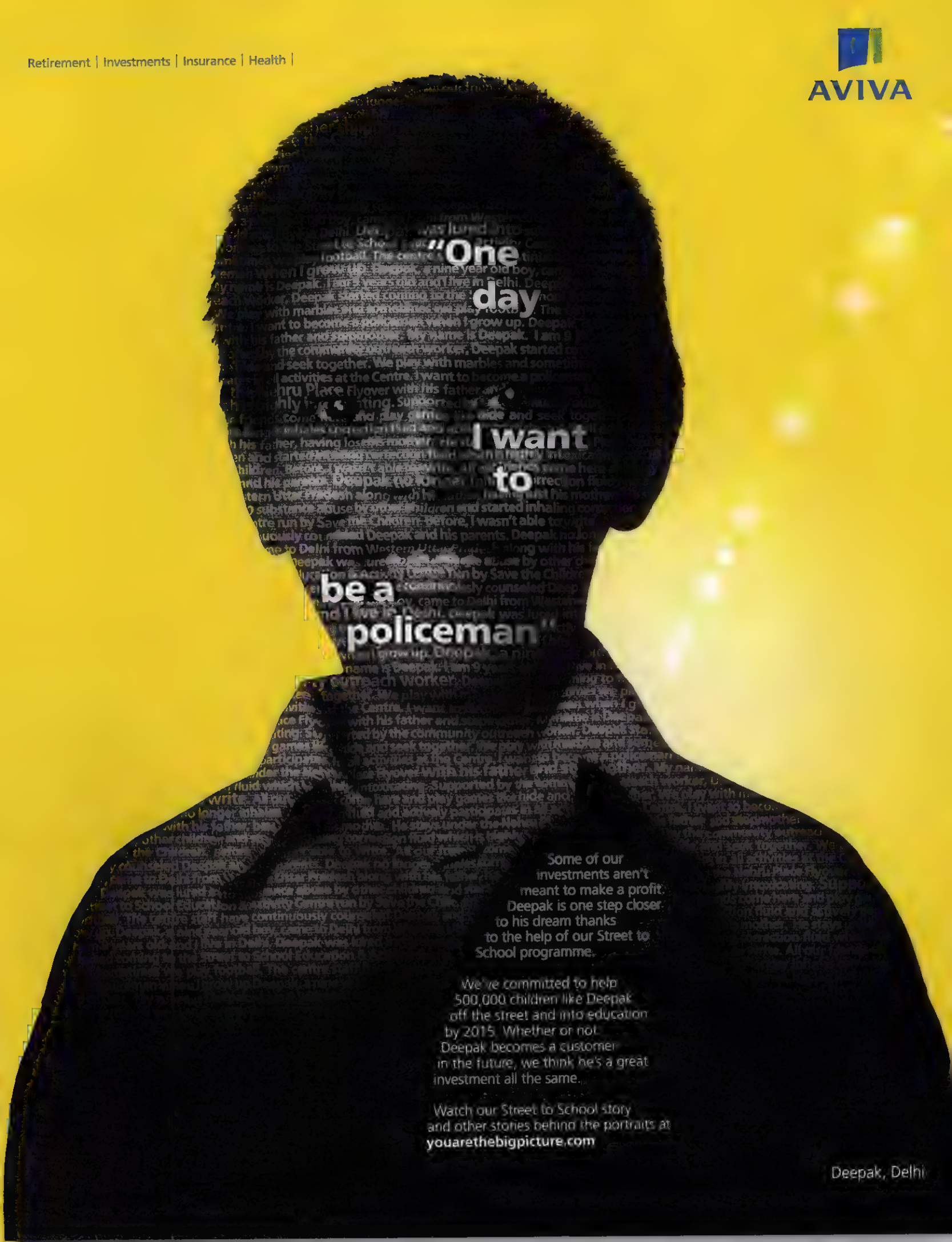
AVIVA



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We've committed to help 500,000 children like Deepak off the street and into education by 2015. Whether or not Deepak becomes a customer in the future, we think he's a great investment all the same.

Watch our Street to School story and other stories behind the portraits at **youarethebigpicture.com**

Deepak, Delhi

Art, and craft
Thomas Heatherwick and his Spun chairs, at his studio in London, November 2011. The models and prototypes are all, unusually, made on the premises

DESIGN

Things to come

He makes pavilions from seeds, wraps handbags in zips, and breathes life into buses. **Bryan Appleyard** meets Thomas Heatherwick, the designer whose quirky style points to a new kind of architecture

[illegible] King's Cross station in London, beyond [illegible] gates and a grey cave lined with bicycles, [illegible] doors swing open to reveal a palace of strange delights. What appear to be the severed heads of giant chess pieces lean on the floor, a huge length of aluminium reaches a torn end, random consumer products – an expensive handbag, a Tasmanian Devil [illegible] are displayed on shelves, there is some kind of ornamental wooden throne, ranks of Dell computer screens and a wall full of pictures of yet more oddities. There's also a giant model of a bridge.

I am led to a table and given a neatly laid-out selection of coffee, grapes and shortbread. Finally, a dark, curly-haired, slightly bearded man appears with a wide-open, ecstatic expression, a bit like Harpo Marx when playing the harp. This is Thomas Heatherwick who, if all goes well, could be the future of British, if not world, architecture.

The office is Heatherwick Studio and it is nothing like an architect's office. Typically they are hard, purposeful, glassy and modernist; this is soft, cosy and stylistically indefinable. And, forgive me, the loos are a joy – not stainless-steel cells but domestic rooms with Victorian wooden shelves, a traditional bowl and a Rubberline cistern high above your head.

"That cistern was interesting," Heatherwick says, evidently enchanted to find I am interested. "You can still buy them and it really is all rubber." Then second thoughts flicker across his face. "But how much of a message do you need to get across in your toilet?"

Heatherwick is not an architect; his qualifications are all in design. But he is the increasingly well-known

PORTRAIT BY IAN WINSTANLEY

> figurehead of a studio that employs 75 people and is working on some very big buildings, notably in China and Malaysia. It also built the Seed Cathedral, the giant hedgehog that was the much-feted British pavilion at the Shanghai Expo. And 2012 should make Heatherwick famous at home, too. In May he will have his first significant solo exhibition, at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and Thames & Hudson will publish a book on his work. The cauldron which holds the Olympic flame will be a Heatherwick.

Spectacular as all that is, it is a much humbler Heatherwick design by which the British public will judge him. It's big, it's red, it costs £300,000, it has old-fashioned bench seats, two staircases, three doors and a very new-fashioned swoopy window-line. Yes, he designed the new London bus. It is an attempt to revive the spirit and quality of the old, beloved Routemaster and replace the current generation of hideous, strip-lit Euro-boxes that infest the city. The first few are on the streets now. The *Guardian*'s architecture critic Jonathan Glancey gave it a stinker – "fussy…too many swirls" – but the popular jury is out.

The jury of Heatherwick's peers, however, is definitely in. Before we met, I watched him give the big annual lecture at the Royal Institute of British Architects. The place was packed and expectant, eager to hear him on the theme of the union of architecture and design. But he didn't bother with that; instead he did a survey of recent projects, complete with anecdotes in funny voices – his bureaucrats are all squeaky and there's a robot voice for designs that look "too digital" – and some pretty wild arm gestures. The event told me four things: he is in the big time, he doesn't like to deal in abstractions, he's definitely got a touch of Harpo, and middle-aged women want to mother him.

Aged 41, he lives with his partner and their young twins in an 1830s house near the studio. He was brought up in Wood Green in north London, the grandson of Miles Tomalin, poet and Spanish civil-war veteran. His mother is a world expert on beads. His father, Hugh, a musician and community worker, left her when Heatherwick was 14. But they all stay in touch and his father helps out in the studio.

School did not come naturally to Heatherwick. "I wasn't interested in sports. I couldn't see the point of running around on Tarmac trying to catch a ball. I was more interested in making things." But his mechanical imagination was prodigious. At the age of seven, he stumbled on the idea of the hybrid car, a motor-dynamo combination that he thought at the time would be a perpetual-motion machine.

"Nobody would explain to me why it wouldn't work, they didn't tell me about friction and heat. It's funny how some of the simplest things you imagine when you're young appear later. I remember thinking, with that greed children have, that ice-creams should be bigger and then, years later, they invented the Magnum, enough ice-cream on a stick to make you sick."

Swoops, spokes and spikes
ABOVE Heatherwick's ribbon-like ceiling at the revamped Pacific Place complex in Hong Kong
RIGHT Seed Cathedral's interior, lit by daylight filtered through its hundreds of optical strands
BELOW The short-lived "B of the Bang" sculpture in Manchester

At Manchester Polytechnic, he studied three-dimensional design. He wanted, reasonably enough, to extend this to include architecture, so his teachers told him to build a model. No, he said, he wanted to make a real building. He was indulged and, over the course of a year in the college courtyard, "Pavilion" emerged, a twisted, transparent gem. Already it was Heatherwickian in its novel use of materials, structural ingenuity and, in plan, the twisted, organic shape.

But the statement was the simple fact that he built it with his own hands. It was a gesture that expressed his dismay at what he had learned about the architecture profession – essentially, that it was indeed a profession, a hands-off operation. The average architect never picked up a brick.

"I knew I was interested in building, but the architectural world at the time just didn't feel right, it felt very theoretical. It was like it was its own art-form, whereas I saw it as an extension of design, designing things that do jobs and also have many dimensions – environmental, material, craft, aesthetic, sculptural, a smell dimension. And then suddenly I discovered there was this threshold, bajoom…!" – he does his finest Harpo upward gaze of wonder – "where it became something else, architecture!"

Heatherwick built his pavilion in the midst of a civil war in architecture. On one side were modernists, >

> the heirs of Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius. On the other were assorted post-modernists, neo-classicists, rural revivalists and, of course, Prince Charles, whose interventions had enlisted a wider public in the cause of anti-modernism.

It was an arid conflict. The modernists believed in political and social ideologies, and a highly deterministic and totalitarian aesthetic which said that modernism was not just a style, it was the only acceptable way to build. The antis were alarmed at the despoliation of our cities in the name of modernist purity. Various revivalist styles emerged in response, led by neo-classicism and including post-modernism, a poorly defined and all too often visually shallow style.

The result was a greater stylistic diversity but not much real originality. Deterministic modernism was not defeated but marched on, and remains the dominant style to this day. Architects such as Foster, Rogers and Piano build apartment blocks, offices and airports around the world in techno-modernist forms. Here and there a few mavericks – Will Alsop, Frank Gehry – have moved in, but, in essence, the old modernist culture endures with the architect as the hero, the conductor of the design orchestra.

Unnoticed at the time, Thomas Heatherwick's handbuilt pavilion was an omen that this phase was coming to an end.

HEATHERWICK WENT ON to the Royal College of Art to study furniture design. There he engineered a meeting with Sir Terence Conran, who invited him to stay at his home while he worked on a design for a sort of gazebo. Where "Pavilion" had dozens of components, Heatherwick explains, the gazebo had only one: plywood. He picks up the shortbread to demonstrate its construction, but sadly it collapses. Happily, the real thing still exists, a majestically curved X of interlocked wood with seats inside for two.

The late modernists who dominated architectural teaching were theorists. Theirs was an architecture of the word: actual buildings came second. But if Heatherwick had an idea, he had to build it. He was treating architecture like any other art – you had to do it to get better at it. "I was interested in ideas becoming reality. You could have your perfect world of models and drawings that would always be perfect, but it is reality where you really learn."

After the RCA he set up his first studio, and won a commission from the department store Harvey Nichols for an installation for London Fashion Week. Instead of the usual window displays, he created "Autumn Intrusion", a 200-metre ribbon of wood and polystyrene that coiled in and out of the windows

The road ahead
ABOVE The Routemaster London bus in its classic form (TOP), and Heatherwick's new, improved, swoopy version
RIGHT The stairs, playing sinuous homage to the original

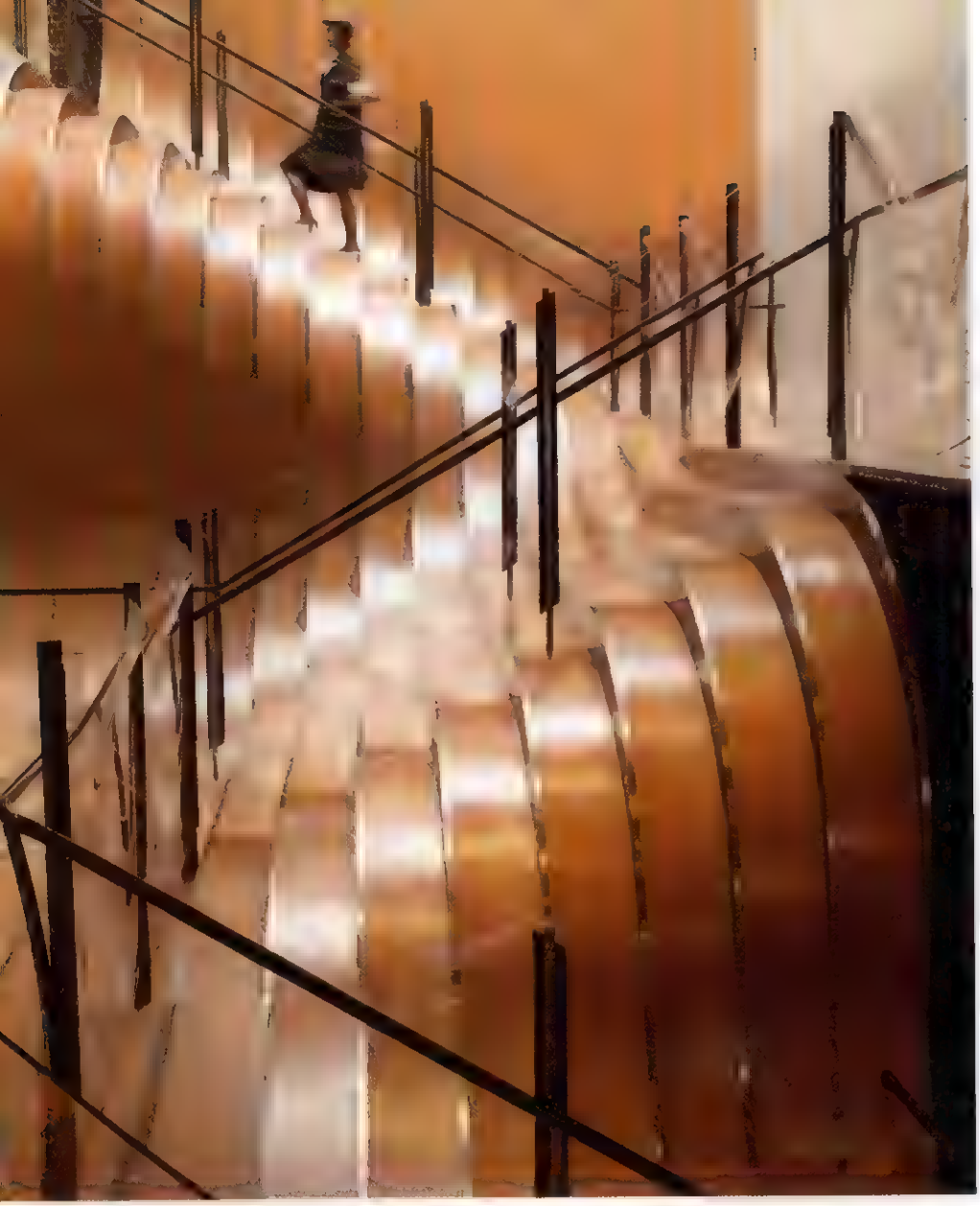
He may not have a house style, but there is something of the Victorian romantic about Heatherwick

and up the façade of the building. It was a brilliant debut that won an award, stopped traffic and – though Heatherwick denies having a style – signalled his inclination towards curved, organic forms, as well as a flair for drama.

But it was also a clear move away from the sort of modernism which favours large glass panels at street level, clashing with the older buildings above. Heatherwick's ribbon broke through the window pattern and tied the upper floors to the ground. Large sheets of glass are, for him, inhuman. "A building landing on a street with such large singular components reminds human beings how tiny they are. They have very little of human scale and perspective, and when you come up close there's a sterilising effect. You feel you need to speed up to get past something like that."

Another Heatherwickian creation that stopped traffic was a small, pleasantly but quietly designed little bridge in Paddington Basin. It was a moving bridge that, instead of turning or lifting, rolled up like a carpet. Just as his gazebo and pavilion were like Victorian follies, this was like a 19th-century celebration of mechanical engineering, ingenious yet simple. He may not have a house style, but there is something of the Victorian romantic about Heatherwick.

And then it all went horribly wrong and he entered "the worst two years of my life". "B of the Bang" was a 56-metre-high sculpture that was to commemorate the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. It was a soaring mass of 180 identical steel spikes and a project



everybody loved – until some of the spikes started falling off. The local press stoked outrage and, finally, it was removed. Heatherwick Studio and the contractors ended up paying £1.7m in damages. His face falls when I bring it up, and he seems weary and close to tears. "I love Manchester…I still believe the idea to be valid." He points to the way Chicago held its nerve when there were problems with Anish Kapoor's "Cloud Gate" in Millennium Park and costs soared. His project could, he says, have been fixed. He considered chaining himself to the structure, but then he shrugs, and says: "It's their city, not mine, and it was their decision."

He survived and, by then, his practice was becoming more clearly that of an architect. There was, for example, a beach café in Littlehampton, a sculpted rusted-steel form that looks like a wall of boulders from one perspective or a wave from another. Again there was no predetermined style, only Heatherwick's insistence on letting the location, the function and the atmosphere of the place determine the building. When I ask about this, Peter Ayres, the studio's project architect on the scheme, points to one of the objects on the shelves. It is a clump of brickwork retrieved from the sea, its rough surface smoothed , and its edges softened and rounded by the waves. Location, in this case, includes the weathering effects of the environment. A rusty shed has a more authentically maritime feel than a slick glass box.

Up, up and along

ABOVE When Heatherwick built a flagship store for Longchamp in New York, he specified this wall of stairs, built of magnetic, hot-rolled steel

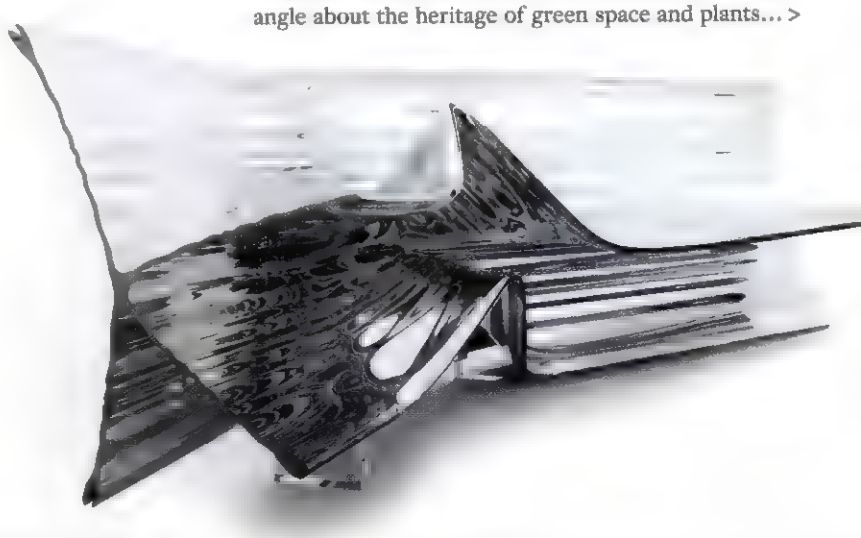
BELOW "Extrusions", a three-metre bench made of aluminium squeezed through a press, demonstrates his interest in using single components

Two important projects remain unbuilt. One is a Buddhist temple in Japan, an immensely complex, folded wooden structure, perhaps Heatherwick's most obvious use of organic forms. The other is a bio-fuel power station in Stockton, north-east England. It looks like a romantic riverside palace and would, if built, transform our expectations of what have become rather shameful and disregarded structures.

The power station demonstrates another movement away from modernist convention. Heatherwick wants to take architecture into new building forms – not museums, but power stations and, he hopes, hospitals and prisons. "Museums just seem to have this borrowed cachet – if I want to seem cultural, I will design something cultural. I resist the idea that culture is only opera houses or theatres. Culture is your entire life around you: toilets, the bus, the kerb or the dump where you drag your waste. Culture has come to mean the arts, but it's swimming pools as well."

But now we come to the turning point, the grand gesture that put Heatherwick on the international A-list. Everybody agreed the 2010 Shanghai Expo was the biggest and most expensive ever, but nobody could ever agree on what an Expo was meant to be. Asked to build a British pavilion, one's first thoughts would turn to Beefeaters, royal weddings and Union Jack oven-gloves. The Heatherwick Studio rejected all that and decided what was needed was a hairy building.

The Seed Cathedral was a simple box penetrated by 60,000, 7.5-metre transparent strands, with a seed or seeds embedded in each internal tip. The strands bent and waved, creating a continuously mobile outer perimeter. "We tried to imagine what every other country would do," says Stuart Wood, Heatherwick's longest-serving lieutenant, "and then we adopted an angle about the heritage of green space and plants… >



Smoke and mirrors
An as yet unbuilt bio-fuel power station, "a romantic, riverside palace"

> and then made the building the exhibition and the exhibition the building."

Oddly, having so assiduously avoided the obvious, the studio was startled to find it emerged anyway. From a distance, ghostly patterns emerged on the surface. They looked like monochrome Union Jacks.

Before the Expo, the studio was already working on a big refurbishment of Pacific Place, a shopping mall in Hong Kong; afterwards East Asian developers started appearing with huge projects. Now the studio is an international architectural force. It remains, however, an all-round design practice and art studio. Via the Haunch of Venison gallery in London, it sells pieces that emerge from design experiments. That giant length of aluminium I saw is, in fact, one of a series of £18,000-plus benches made of extruded aluminium. The lopped-off chess pieces are spinning chairs, sold for about £340 by Magis. The handbag – which has a two-metre long zip – was designed by Heatherwick for Longchamp, the luxury leather-goods brand. (He later did its shop in New York.) The giant bridge model, of course, rolls up like a carpet. And the Tasmanian Devil toy – well, sometimes a Tasmanian Devil toy is just a Tasmanian Devil toy.

His design style is a strange hybrid of whimsy, geometry and engineering. The love of the organic and the playful is evident both in his collected objects and in the final designs. The bus has a toy-like quality and a distinctly attractive face, which scales down its bulk. Heatherwick's personal charm suffuses his work.

But it is not all charm. Just as engineering and geometry represent the tough underside of Heatherwick's design, so his charm is hardened by his managerial personality. This side of him comes out when I am allowed to watch a meeting of the team working on a 3m-square-foot project in China.

The studio is divided into squares in which groups work closely together. In one of these squares a team of mostly young architects gathers round a table full of models and in front of a wall of complex drawings. Some of the models are obvious rejects – "Saddam palaces", the team calls them, because of their bleak but vainglorious lines. But two represent the heart of the matter. The first is a beautiful arrangement of many plates, forming balconies and terraces. This ran into the brick wall of Chinese planning controls. The second is a later version, now full of spikes, some 100 metres tall and others with single trees on top.

Heatherwick wants to make everything special, true to itself

Heatherwick is not content with this and, bar the odd funny voice, he is no longer Harpo. All eyes are fixed upon him, checking his reactions. His charisma has turned to an edgy intensity. A troubleshooter – an American architect named Fred – is tangling with the staff's ideas and we are suddenly in the deep architectural mysteries of grid orientations. All the cosiness of the studio has dropped away. So much is at stake – this is a building worth many hundreds of millions of pounds – and yet so little seems to be decided. The meeting ends, and the staff go back to try again to get at the shape in Heatherwick's head.

He is clearly a tough, strategic thinker, not the old modernist hero-architect hiding behind a mask of whimsy. His methods are different from those men, his designs are too localised and far too unexpected. Heatherwick wants to make everything special, true to itself and to its place in the world. He dislikes arriving in a new city and being able to identify the architects of buildings: that just means they are built in a style that pays no attention to the uniqueness of the place. He wants special reasons to visit cities – which is why his bus looks different from, but also just as "London" as, the old Routemaster. After the long decades of modernist globalism, Thomas Heatherwick is the return of the local and the unique. ■

Heatherwick Studio: Designing the Extraordinary *V&A, London, May 31st to September 30th*

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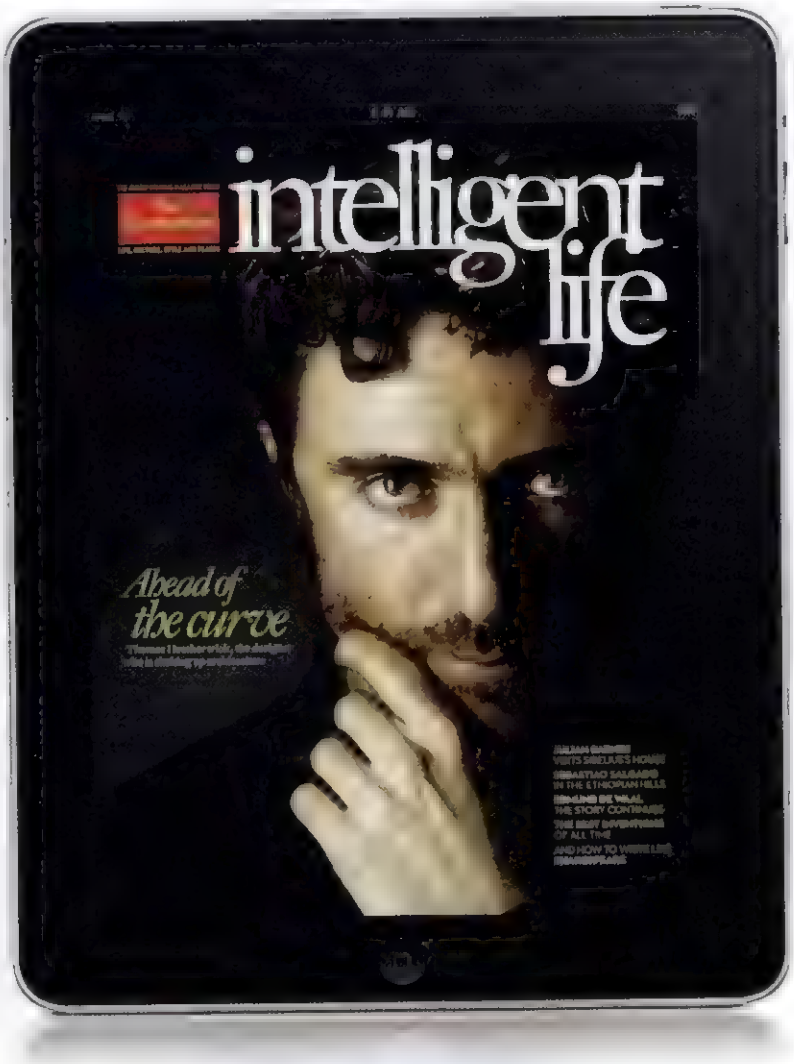

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Rebecca Willis *Applied Fashion*

Marie Antoinette did it, and so do more and more of today's women. What's up with Big Hair?

YOU CAN LEARN a lot from what you don't find on the supermarket shelves. Hair products, for instance, are obsessed with volumising, thickening and lifting, but it's impossible to find a single one that offers the flattening, thinning or drooping options. Well, there was one "for dull, lifeless hair", but I'm pretty sure it is promising to cure that condition rather than cause it. (The word "for" is ambiguous – where were the marketing people in that meeting?) Pedantry aside, though, the message is clear: the beauty industry is trying to defy gravity over every inch of our bodies, including our hair.

Big Hair is having a moment. It has been for a long time. I'm not averse to a bit of back-combing myself, in an attempt to get some "root lift" (no, not the kind that makes houses subside). I ask my hairdresser, Nando, whom I occasionally remember to visit, to explain the craze for hair extensions. He tells me that for a woman who's had thin hair all her life, they can be a dream come true –like a breast enlargement only without the bloodshed. But that raises a lot of questions. What is the dream of big hair about? Why this desire for our faces to be haloed like a Renaissance saint?

It's partly, and simply, that thinning hair is associated with ageing, in both men and women, and also – even in the days before chemotherapy sealed the deal – with illness and disease. Thick hair goes hand in hand with health and our old friend, youth. When you decode our vanities, it seems they are all haunted by the quest for immortality.

To the same youthful end, big hair alters the proportions: of the head to the body, and of the head itself. Anyone who has ever tried to draw or paint a child will know that the eyes and other features are set much lower in the head than in an adult – that configuration is what makes us go aaah! when we see babies and kittens. Scientists have shown that women whose faces are "neotenised" (that is, have baby-face characteristics) are perceived as more attractive; big hair helps create that lower-eyes illusion. Also, like the oversized handbags and sunglasses favoured by Hollywood waifs, it makes the body seem smaller in relation to the head – as a child's is. (It is a curious sign of the times that these women pare down their actual bodies, and then add body to their hair: big hair is mass without weight, eye-catching as a hot-air balloon.) Then there is the issue of height – in a society that fetishises elongation and tallness, high hair does the same job as high heels, but at the other end.

I read recently that Britain is the third-largest importer of human hair in the world. (China and America take the first two places on that strange podium.) A lot of it is used in the hair-extension industry, estimated to be worth £60m a year, and endorsed by the so-called celebrities who fill our television screens. Websites such as BuyHair peddle extensions in every natural human colour – and some parakeet ones too – and explain the various methods of attaching them, a salon procedure that costs up to £2,500 when done "well". Does that qualify as money for old rope?

It makes me distinctly queasy, and not just because I associate the roots of the hair with nit checks. I know full well that hair is dead, not living tissue, and that as we grow it anyway, it might as well be harvested. But for me the whole business of real-hair extensions conjures up images of organ trafficking, of human beings as farm animals.

Hair extensions are a 21st-century version of the elaborate powdered wigs and hairpieces worn in the late 18th century, some of which were modelled over a cage frame or horsehair pads for extra height. Then, as now, hair that has been laboriously tended emitted a social signal. Whether you're Marie Antoinette or Cheryl Cole, big hair says: I have time, money, and people to look after me, and therefore – to paraphrase L'Oréal – I must be worth it.

I suppose I just thought we had evolved a bit more during the last three centuries. While I was wrestling with my aversion to hair extensions, I read in Susan Brownmiller's book "Femininity" (1984) that, throughout history, impoverished women "under the laws of supply and demand" were encouraged to view their own hair as wet nurses viewed the milk from their breasts. "Hair and milk were exploitable commodities that could serve the upper classes, an exploitation less stigmatised...than the selling of sex."

Hair extensions may be the follicular equivalent of a boob job for some – and who am I to trample on another woman's dreams? But I can promise, cross my heart, that, having somehow managed without a wet nurse, I won't be sticking someone else's hair on my head. However well-endowed it might make me feel. ■

ILLUSTRATION **BILL BROWN**

THE SCEPTICAL SHOPPER

Smell the money

Buy a bottle of perfume and you could pay as much for its advertising as its contents. Our undercover expert sniffs out some alternatives

WEARING SCENT IS one of life's pleasures. Humans have been dousing themselves in concoctions of olfactive molecules since at least the Bronze Age, and any habit that persistent has to have something going for it. Yet it does seem odd that most of the time we mask our own, genetically unique smell with others so widely available you can catch a whiff of them in cities across the planet: Opium on the streets of Barcelona, Eternity in Istanbul.

Heavily advertised, widely worn perfumes can smell good. But buy one and a fair proportion of your cash will go on its marketing, not on its contents. All those portentous, mini-movie perfume ads – filled with celebrity models running (presumably so they don't have to spoil the effect by speaking) towards romantic assignations through increasingly rococo sets – don't come anything close to cheap. Not only this, but such perfumes are vital money-makers for fashion brands, so they are almost without exception made to a price. When profit is put before pong, the results tend to be one-dimensional scents, made of cheap ingredients, that smell the same on everyone. Perhaps most irritating is that this instant recognisability is in fact a bonus for the big manufacturers. It turns you into a walking advert for their product – and unlike those celebrity models, you're not getting paid.

Unfortunately, having a bespoke perfume made just for you will cost upwards of £600 for 100ml of eau de parfum (the most concentrated form of perfume), whereas a similar volume of a globally available brand typically costs £70. So it might be worth considering the middle ground – what you might call niche perfumes, which tend to cost anything from £80-£350 for 100ml. These are produced on a small scale, often by individual "noses" rather than existing fashion labels, have a negligible or non-existent advertising spend, and you won't smell them wafting down every high street.

What, if any, is the actual difference? Most perfumes are a combination of top, middle and bass notes – scented ingredients ranked according to their volatility. Citrus smells, the commonest top notes, are highly volatile and disappear fast. Resinous base-note ingredients, such as myrrh or benzoin, last for many hours. Notes may be natural, or synthetic; the finest, hardest-to-harvest natural notes, such as aoud, or Grasse jasmine, can cost, ounce for ounce, more than gold. Don't turn your nose up at synthetics, however: they can mimic existing smells that can't be captured directly – lilac, for instance – or smell, literally, like nothing on earth.

Mass-market perfumes put all the bang into their top notes, because they want an instant sale

Mass-market perfumes often nab you from the first sniff – they put all the bang into their top notes, because they want an instant sale. Niche perfumes are more complicated: like little stories in a bottle, their narrative unfolds throughout the day as the particular heat and microflora of your skin affect their layered ingredients. But you have to learn to love them. Without exception, of all the niche perfumes I tried for this article, it was those I at first disliked that most grew on me. When I first dabbed on Juliette Has a Gun's Not a Perfume (£79/100ml), I was nonplussed. Six hours later I wanted to eat myself. E. Coudray's Nohiba (£58/100ml)? Cloying and sweet when first on, wonderfully sexy after a few hours. Nez à Nez's Atelier d'Artiste, £105/100ml? Hated it on the blotter, but loved it on my skin: so complex I felt like I was watching a film. I don't know about you, but I'd rather watch a film than be an advert. ■

[illegible]sts juliettehasagun.com; nezanez.net, coudray-parfumeur.com

ILLUSTRATION **RICHARD ROCKWOOD**

THE LINE OF BEAUTY

Fur

Nothing in fashion arouses such devotion, or such revulsion. **Matthew Sweet** traces the story of fur – without harming any animals

Inuit child
Before fashion, before culture, before morality, there was the survival instinct. And if your life depends on the hunting and slaughter of enviably fat and sleek-skinned mammals, then it would be odd not to clothe your body in the hide of something whose blubber you have just swallowed. This Inuit girl was shot in 1955; the seals she's wearing were shot some time before that. If her people had a term for those who have qualms about such things, I'd bet it would be something close to the word for "suicidal".

Portrait of a Young Woman Lucas Cranach, c.1540
The identity of Cranach's sitter is unknown, but her high status is clear: not just from that fine bone structure, but from that gold, those rings, and – my dear! – that great and asymmetric swoop of superfly lapel. It's probably beaver, since you ask – a fur so prized in 16th-century Europe for its glossy, water-resistant qualities that 17th-century Europe was signally bereft of beavers.

Wilhelm II 1894
Friedrich Wilhelm Viktor Albrecht von Preussen rose from being the horrible little boy who misbehaved at Prince Albert's funeral to the last Kaiser of all the Germans. When shooting things in East Prussia he kitted himself out in this eye-catching number. It is possibly something he bagged – the despondent remains of the cub moving in precisely the opposite direction to its killer's onward-and-upward moustache. Hunting is what Wilhelm did while pretending to be at work – "it is truly scandalous", asserted one observer, "how the court reports fool the public about Wilhelm's activity."

Yellow wool sweater, £315, by Bally (bally.com); nude net and fake-fur skirt, £425, by Simone Rocha for John Rocha (johnrocha.ie); over-the-knee boot, £705, by Sergio Rossi (sergiorossi.com)

Photographer *Uli Weber*
Stylist *Olivia Pomp*
Hair *Dom Capel*
Make-up *Nicky Tavilla*
Model *Gigi @ Next Models*

Faking it AW11/12
The runway has never been much of a forum for moral or political argument – and the rights and wrongs of fur are less debated by the people at Prada and Gucci than they are by those in the world beyond their doors. For a while, the real stuff was out; right now, it is defiantly in – particularly if treated to the faintly perverse twist of having been dyed in the hues of extreme artificiality. Our model here has slipped into something fake. If those around the catwalk sneer at this as ersatz, we point to Karl Lagerfeld, who last year presented a tableau of fake-fur creations against a giant crag of real ice. As an ideological statement, it was pretty indecipherable – but for one night only, nothing was to die for.

▲ **Joan Crawford** 1932
Crawford, at her most Medusan and upside-down-mouthed, caused a fashion revolution in the film "Letty Lynton" (1932). *Vogue* declared that "every little girl...felt she would die" without the dress Joan's wearing, swamped beneath a tidal wave of fur. The fluffy stuff was already freighted with its own history of death – and she seems to take savage enjoyment in the burden. Sure, that sneer says, this is what a predator does with its prey – wearing it to memorialise a moment of triumphant violence. >

Miami Beach 1940

This shot by Alfred Eisenstaedt filled a whole page of *Life* magazine – the accompanying copy described how "decorative [women] motivated by greed, exhibitionism, sociability or mere duty" gathered on the seven sandy miles of Miami Beach. Fur here is code for a certain kind of careless American vulgarity. Eisenstaedt was a German Jew who emigrated westwards in 1935, for all the obvious reasons. He had already captured Hitler and Mussolini with his camera. When this picture ran, in March 1940, the United States, like this woman, had its back turned to Europe.

Marilyn Monroe 1955

In 1955, Marilyn Monroe was in need of comfort: awaiting the dissolution of her marriage to Joe DiMaggio; suspended from her contract with Fox; licking her wounds in New York, and being invited to explore them by the method-acting guru Lee Strasberg. The fur here seems to be providing what she needs – giving her a place to rest her weary body. But it also says something about her dream of renewal – it frames her with its virginal, snowy softness. Once she has awoken from its bed, a second chance awaits her.

Elizabeth Taylor 1963

In 1963, Liz Taylor meant money, and it was a form of currency that seemed unlikely to be affected by inflation or depression. Thanks to "Cleopatra", she was the world's highest-paid film star – the $7m she received for rolling herself up in a carpet had given her wealth a fabled quality. This still is from "The VIPs" – a drama set at London Airport – and her fur telegraphs that middle "I". It says riches. It says privilege. It says rank. And now it's a sly reminder of the days when Heathrow meant those things too.

AKG, TIME LIFE, GETTY REX

John Lennon 1968
John Lennon! Utopian! Vegetarian! Pacifist! A bitch for mink! In one of the few funny utterances he has ever made, Elton John sent up his friend's materialism with a parodic rhyme: "Imagine six apartments/It isn't hard to do/One is full of fur coats/The other's full of shoes." It might have been an exaggeration, but we do know that Lennon and Yoko Ono bought 40 furs in one night from a salesman who hoicked his stock up the stairs to their flat in the Dakota Building. Ringo, by the way, preferred red plastic macs.

Aretha Franklin 1993
It was the first great moral crisis of the Clinton administration. Aretha Franklin, soul goddess and only the second African-American woman to be featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, turned up to the presidential inauguration in a tent of Russian sable. The jacquard-silk-lined coat was reputed to have cost $150,000, and attracted no end of criticism. "Aretha often gets cold on stage," explained her publicist. But it was below freezing when Obama was sworn in. Franklin sang for him, too – in grey wool, and a Luke Song hat that was claimed by the Smithsonian.

Kate Moss 2011
The tacit support Kate Moss has lent the fur industry is second only, perhaps, to that which she has given the coca farmers of Central America. Nobody is obliged to take her seriously. But she does exert a powerful impact on street fashion in Britain, and the many women who step out in fake-fur jackets, boots and skinny jeans are probably doing so under her influence. French and Italian women, of course, need no such encouragement, and no such substitutes: it's a quaint Anglo-Saxon business, this animal rights. ■

MAN IN A SUIT

Mike Horn

An explorer gets a suit worth searching out

THE MAN

"You don't become an explorer," Mike Horn says in his quiet Afrikaans burr. "You're born one." Well, he should know. He seems like the real deal: no flaky thrill-seeker, but a man who makes arduous expeditions to forbidding places. For his first trick, he climbed 5,597 metres to the source of the Amazon and then spent six months swimming the length of the river, with no back-up team. Later, he circled the Equator without a motor, and went to the North Pole without either a motor or a dog, in darkness. "To be satisfied about myself", he says, "I have to walk to a pole. But not in the summer: in the winter, when no one else does it."

Meeting Horn is like bumping into a shorter version of Tarzan. He is barrel-chested and bulky-shouldered; his handshake grinds your knuckles and his goodbye hug leaves your ribs bruised. Although he claims to be "not good with humans", he seems warm, funny and charming, with just enough bite to make you take him seriously. I threaten to describe him as a weakling with a handshake like a wet fish. "I know you won't," he growls. "I'll hunt you down."

Born in Johannesburg 45 years ago, Horn now lives in Switzerland. He is in demand as a motivator and worked with the Indian cricket team before they won the 2011 World Cup. He is now nearing the end of a four-and-a-half-year project, Pangaea, that he describes as his most rewarding yet. It involves running short conservation projects, ranging from the Gobi Desert to Antarctica, staffed by groups of young volunteers who he hopes will spread the word about the state of the planet. "The world's not in a great state," Horn says flatly. "And we can't bullshit ourselves about it. But if you can go out there, and make kids care for it..."

When Pangaea winds down, he has even grander plans. "Space travel is an option. Maybe I can help create life underwater. Maybe City of Atlantis is my next project."

THE SUIT

In 2002, Horn tied a loose shoelace – and lost the tips of two fingers to frostbite. So it makes sense that when it comes to clothes he prizes longevity, quality and functionality: his daily uniform mixes high-tech base layers and baggy foul-weather waterproofs. But to meet sponsors – who include Officine Panerai and Mercedes-Benz – he needs a suit. Our stylist chose tweed, to give a nod to the golden age of explorers, then modernised it with hiking boots and a chunky cardigan. Horn's verdict? "Pretty comfortable." And the boots? "Well, maybe. To walk down the street in." - KASSIA ST CLAIR

THE DETAILS

Grey Donegal-tweed suit, £695, by Mr Start; claret shirt and tartan tie, £32 (for two-pack of shirts and tie) and hiking boots, £75, both by Next; grey cardigan with collar, £240 , by John Smedley; chunky grey socks, £25 per pack, by Boden

STOCKISTS mr-start.com, next.co.uk, johnsmedley.com, boden.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHER **ALEX LAKE** STYLIST **NICKI BLACK**
Stylist's assistant ***Sarah Lindsay***

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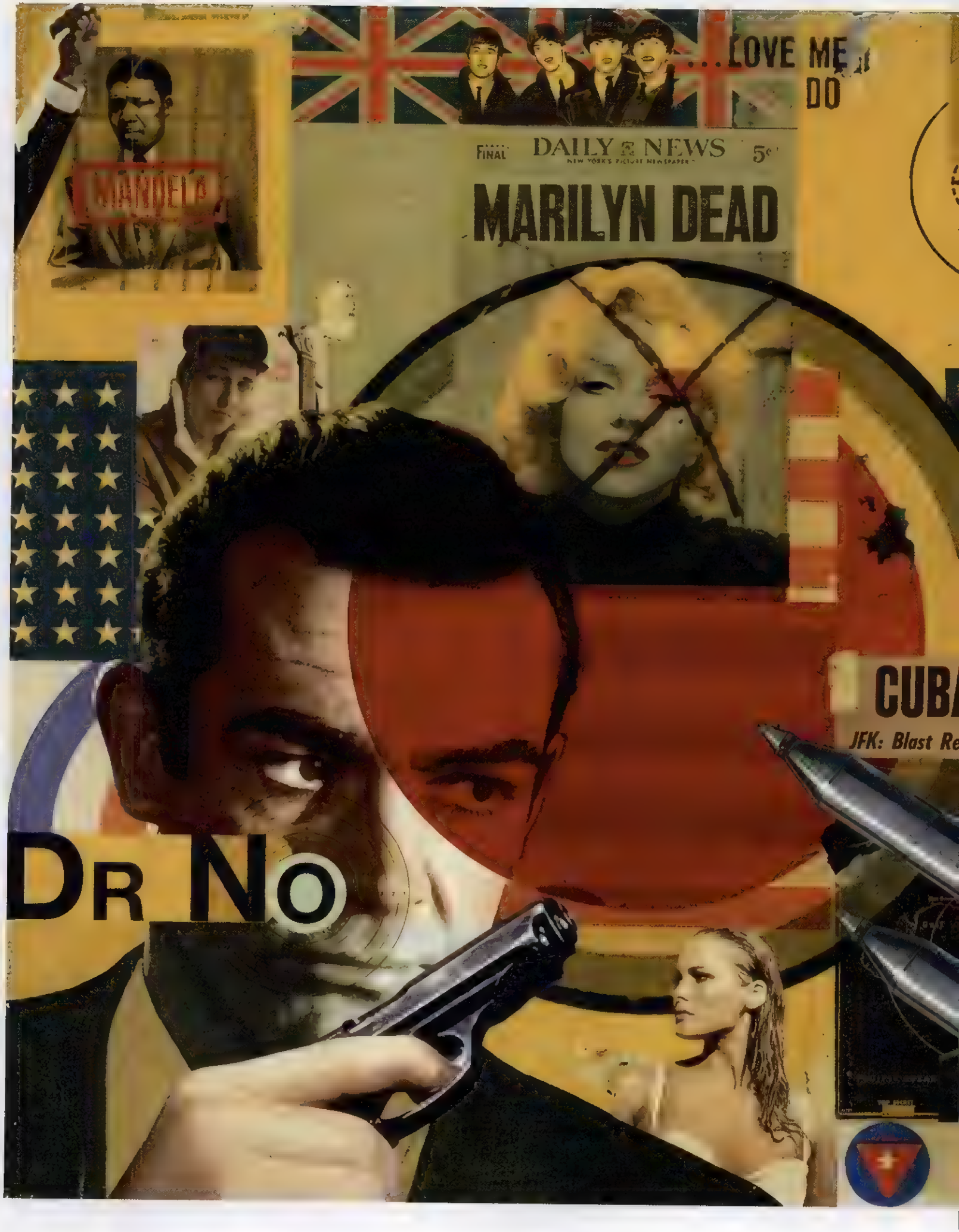
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1962

THE SIXTIES AS WE KNOW THEM BEGAN IN 1963, WHICH HAS TENDED TO LEAVE 1962 IN THE SHADE. BUT THIS WAS A YEAR OF SEISMIC EVENTS AND CULTURAL FIRSTS, AND LATELY IT HAS BECOME FERTILE GROUND FOR FICTION, FROM "THE HELP" TO "ON CHESIL BEACH". **MATTHEW ENGEL** TRAVELS BACK IN TIME

On a cool English summer's day in July 1962, a young middle-class couple called Edward Mayhew and Florence Ponting were married in Oxford and drove to begin their honeymoon by the Dorset coast. The wedding was conventional in an era when convention was followed rigorously. What happened on the wedding night, however, departed from the norms. It was what did not happen that was so unusual. Through a combination of gaucheness on Edward's part, naivety on Florence's and an excess of English reticence from them both, they failed to complete the physical procedure that customarily follows a marriage, with devastating consequences.

Edward and Florence (born circa 1940) did not exist as such. They are the creations of Ian McEwan (born 1948) and the central figures of his much-admired short novel "On Chesil Beach" (published 2007), which is how we know the precise sequence of events on this private occasion. It is the kind of story in which no detail is an accident, and that includes the year in which it was set. When I phoned to ask about it, McEwan seemed quite pleased that someone had noticed.

Had what didn't happen happened (and had they existed), the Mayhews might now be enjoying visits from their grandchildren, and looking forward to their golden wedding in 2012. For most real people who remember 1962, the 50-year mark will not necessarily be a moment of celebration. It was not that kind of year.

We can expect 2012 to be punctuated by the customary anniversary articles. Politically, 1962 is remembered above all for the Cuban missile crisis (October), in which President John F. Kennedy and the Soviet leader Nikita >

ILLUSTRATIONS **BILL BUTCHER**

> Khrushchev led the world as near as it has ever come to instant destruction. The Berlin Wall had just gone up, and all year Khrushchev veered between confrontation and calming. John Glenn's orbit of the Earth (February) established that America would not allow the early Soviet lead in space to go unchallenged. On their Himalayan border, China and India really did go to war, briefly (October-November). In a referendum (April) the French overwhelmingly and finally ratified their tormented retreat from imperialism in Algeria. Adolf Eichmann was hanged in Israel (May), the last reckoning with a major Nazi figure.

The new Coventry cathedral was consecrated (May) to replace its bombed-out predecessor and become perhaps the only well-loved post-war building in Britain. Marilyn Monroe died (August), aged 36, in circumstances that have never lost their morbid fascination. David Bailey and Jean Shrimpton did their first *Vogue* shoot (January, for the April issue), bringing youth and attitude to some starchy pages. Rudolf Nureyev, newly defected, danced with Margot Fonteyn in "Giselle" to loud acclaim at Covent Garden (February). In South Africa, Nelson Mandela was jailed (November) for five years, which turned into 27. In Albany, Georgia (July), Martin Luther King was jailed for two weeks. The Telstar satellite began relaying flickering TV pictures across the Atlantic amid great excitement (July). And Richard Nixon failed in his attempt to become governor of California and angrily announced, 12 years prematurely, that he was quitting politics: "You don't have Nixon to kick around any more." All these events made global headlines.

Not an easy year to sum up, then. *Time*'s choice for Man of the Year, Pope John XXIII, was an unusually subtle and discerning one, reflecting the modernisation and humanisation of the Catholic church that was happening beneath the headlines. Fifty years on, however, modernity and humanity are not the most obvious characteristics of Catholicism. The lasting importance of 1962 stems from what was happening well below *Time*'s radar screen. The volcano that spewed forth all the debris that we think of as the 1960s was bubbling under, waiting to explode. And the vulcanologists were sound asleep.

Even Khrushchev's decision to allow the publication of Solzhenitsyn's "A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch" (November), to highlight the evils of Stalin's labour camps, made little impression in the West. No one can have foreseen how Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" (September) would inspire the environmental movement. Nor did anyone spot the future impact of Anthony Burgess's nihilist novella "A Clockwork Orange" (May): "clumsy...tawdry...aimless" – the *Times*. The author came to hate it too, but the film, made and then withdrawn by Stanley Kubrick, gave it a lasting resonance.

And even after the Canadian academic Marshall McLuhan began to be hailed as a visionary for understanding the significance of the electronic media, no one grasped the importance of the prediction in his 1962 book "The Gutenberg Galaxy": "A computer as a research and communication instrument could enhance retrieval, obsolesce mass library organisation, retrieve the individual's encyclopedic function and flip into a private line to speedily tailored data of a saleable kind." Most of us would not hear the word "internet" for another three decades.

No one guessed that the first James Bond film, "Dr No" (October), would spawn 23 more, and counting. Roy Lichtenstein's cartoon strips and Andy Warhol's soup cans landed on the art scene (November), but left the establishment unimpressed: "like a joke without humour told over and over again", said the *New Yorker* of the soup cans, "until it car-

ries a hint of menace". At least Warhol got some attention, which was more than could be said when Bob Dylan gave the first public performance of "Blowin' in the Wind" at Gerde's Folk City downtown in the West Village (April). Let alone when the Rolling Stones played their first gig, at the Marquee Club in London (July).

The invention of sexual intercourse, as Philip Larkin explained and for which the Stones may have been partially responsible, did not happen until 1963. There is some evidence that this may not be literally true. But Larkin was clearly correct in recognising 1963 as Year Zero of a new era of frankness and freedom. For "On Chesil Beach", McEwan chose the previous year advisedly. "I have often thought 'Could I write that novel and set it now?'" he said. "I don't think it would be entirely impossible, but it would have to be two young Muslims, perhaps someone marrying a cousin he hasn't met from a remote village in Bangladesh. My Chesil Beach couple were almost the last of a line. A few years later and it would have been unlikely."

When Edward and Florence were married, the Pill was only just starting to move into wide usage, its side-effects still uncertain. "It's a 1962 subject which is probably second only in importance to the nuclear bomb," shouted Audrey Whiting in the *Daily Mirror*, then Britain's biggest-selling daily, in a double-page spread billed as "the first real inquiry into a revolution in marriage". Note the word "marriage". Very 1962.

One can still see a formality gap between many of the wartime children who went to college at the start of the decade and the denim-wearing, tie-spurning, plain-speaking baby-boomers who came next. But McEwan touched on another point. Originally, he was planning a novel about the Cuban missile crisis, only to end up writing something microcosmic instead. He is convinced there is a connection. "Cuba was a watershed," he thinks. "That feeling when you just survive a nasty accident and feel liberated because something really awful didn't happen. It leaves you with a new kind of freedom."

Looking back at the papers for that last week in October, it is hard to sense that. Their tone seems almost disembodied. They make Cuba sound little different from all the other trouble-spot crises of the era that filled the foreign news pages...even such long-forgotten items of business as the affairs of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland or "President Frondizi defies the army", whoever and wherever he might have been president of.

Yet Cuba represented far more than that. The comfortable sense we mostly have now that nuclear war is unthinkable did not exist in 1962. In the preceding half-century, the unthinkable had already happened twice, in the form of horrific world wars. Why not a third? As a child (born 1951), I absorbed, as unconsciously as one absorbs the certainty of death, the likelihood that it would come suddenly, violently and soon. Yet I don't remember losing any sleep about it. As Tom Lehrer, the marvellous mathematician-cum-satirist who was a cult figure of the time, sang:

> Oh, we will all fry together when we fry
> We'll be French fried potatoes by and by
> There will be no more misery
> When the world is our rotisserie
> Yes, we will all fry together when we fry

It turns out I was not alone. McEwan, an army child sent away to boarding school, felt the same: "I remember being pretty sure it was going to happen, but kept writing my weekly letter home with the sports scores. I thought the world might end pretty soon but I didn't want to worry my parents." The writer Jenny Diski (born 1947 and author of the wish-you-were-here memoir "The Sixties", 2009) remembers endless teenage conversations that went something like this:

"What are you going to do before the bomb drops?"

"Have sex – you don't want to die a virgin, do you?"

Across the Atlantic the screenwriter Howard Schuman (born 1940) endured "those ludicrous take-cover drills" which in the late 1950s became as much part of American school routine as the Pledge of Allegiance: "I had very severe nuclear nightmares over and over again." They receded, but in October 1962 the nightmares returned with a vengeance.

"COULD I WRITE 'ON CHESIL BEACH' AND SET IT NOW?" IAN McEWAN WONDERS. "IT WOULD HAVE TO BE TWO YOUNG MUSLIMS..."

Not every child was as badly affected. The journalist Michael Goldfarb (born 1950), who, like Schuman, now lives in London, was growing up in suburban Philadelphia, blessed with a very American sense of invulnerability. "It never occurred to me that we might be killed. But English friends have said it. London was still scarred from bomb damage, and the prospect must have seemed much more real in Europe. Nothing could hurt us."

Paris, less than two decades on from the liberation, was even further from peace: in January and February a series of bombs went off there, planted by the OAS (Organisation of the Secret Army), the hardline soldiers opposed to Algeria's independence.

But for a moment now America had the shakes. Perhaps the most talked-about (if not best-remembered) book of the year was "Fail-safe" by Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler, a thriller based on the notion of nuclear war happening by accident. On Sunday October 21st the *New York Times* carried a news story in which a Pentagon official insisted that the scenario painted in "Fail-safe" was "virtually impossible". >

> The following evening, President Kennedy made, in the paper's words, "a speech of extraordinary gravity", telling Americans that the Soviet Union was building offensive bases in Fidel Castro's Cuba and demanding that Moscow "move the world back from the abyss of destruction". And thus the United States began blockading Cuba and the ultimate week of nuclear brinksmanship began, reaching crisis point by the Wednesday. In Washington, the radical polemicist I.F. Stone told supporters: "Six thousand years of human history is to come to an end. Do not expect to be alive tomorrow."

As the UN Security Council met, a diarist wrote in the *New Yorker*: "For a whole day we waited for something to happen, gauging, minute by minute, in something like pain, our ignorance of what the next minute might bring." Also in New York, Howard Schuman thought: "These are all my fears come true." But then he went out and bought tickets for a Broadway musical, "Little Me", for a date after the expected general incineration. "I'm a one-man dichotomy," he admits. Jenny Diski was sitting alone on the beach in Sussex, wholly convinced that she was about to die: "I was reading 'Crime and Punishment' and 'Jude the Obscure', so I was that way inclined."

On the Wednesday night, most of the ships carrying missiles to Cuba turned back, prompting the famous comment from the secretary of state, Dean Rusk: "We were eyeball to eyeball and the other fellow just blinked." From then on the tension eased gradually until, the following Sunday, Khrushchev agreed to dismantle the bases and, not insignificantly, America pledged not to invade Cuba.

"SIX THOUSAND YEARS OF HUMAN HISTORY IS TO COME TO AN END," I.F.STONE TOLD SUPPORTERS. "DO NOT EXPECT TO BE ALIVE TOMORROW"

It all left curiously little trace, though Kennedy's perceived staunchness held the Democrats in good stead in the midterm elections two weeks later. The where-were-you-when moment of that era – the equivalent of 9/11 in this century – did not come for another year, when JFK was assassinated. "It often amazes me that the folk memory of the Cuban missile crisis is so weak," says Ian McEwan. "To this day it seems an unconsidered event." It was certainly a turning point: the fear of nuclear annihilation diminished from then on; and most teenagers began worrying less about getting fried and more about getting laid.

Even before the crisis, the prospect of planetary obliteration did not seem to worry our slightly-elders. Todd Gitlin (born 1943) later became one of the decade's best-known chroniclers with "The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage" (published 1987). He was then a student activist at Harvard. This was not a mainstream activity: "We were basically oddballs," he explains.

Gitlin was one of the main organisers of a national anti-war rally in Washington on a bitter February afternoon. About 8,000 students turned up, carrying placards of excruciating politeness. "Turn Towards Peace", "Think – Don't Imitate the Russians" and "Who's for Peace? Indiana Students". The *New York Times* had a wonderful picture of demonstrators outside the White House. Some of the young men are wearing ties; one of the women, bearing the slogan "Shelters Will Not Save Us", is dressed, despite the weather, in skirt and high heels, as though she were Jackie Kennedy.

So the president sent out a couple of flunkeys ("white-gloved," thinks Gitlin) to provide them with coffee. If any single incident sums up 1962, that could be the one. Americans, especially if they were Harvard men but even if they weren't, were presumed to be on the same side. A few of the protest leaders were later invited in to meet officials at both the State Department, where they felt patronised, and the White House, where they were more cleverly flattered. One of JFK's advisers, McGeorge Bundy, explained to Gitlin with a world-weary air: "Politics is the art of the possible." "It was the first of seven million times I've heard that phrase," says Gitlin now.

Seen through the broken glass of later anti-war demos, all this civility seems unimaginable. But Vietnam was then only slightly above President-whoever-of-Argentina on the global news agenda, even though 1962 was the year when the number of United States "advisers" there climbed from 700 to 12,000. And the classy coffee gesture and the all-college-men-together talks inside the White House played directly to the protesters' weak spot. Essentially, they liked the president. Their midterm attitude towards Kennedy was similar to the modern liberal view of Barack Obama: admiration and affection mitigated by suspicion and some exasperation.

Howard Schuman, then doing a degree at Berkeley on the West Coast, was also an activist. "JFK came over to make a speech in '62," he recalls, "and we decided to picket it instead of going to hear it. But, to tell the truth, most of us wanted to hear it, because we found him charismatic, witty and thoughtful."

Kennedy did not have to face the highly personal rage from the right that besets Obama. That still had other outlets. At the University of Mississippi ("Ole Miss"), desegregation had just been declared by court order. When the new college year began in October, 3,000 troops were brought in to enforce it and allow the admission of a single black man, James Meredith. In the ensuing turmoil, two people died and hundreds were hurt. According to the (London) *Times*: "Meredith walked to his first class this morning amid shouts of 'Come on nigger, smile' and 'The blood is on your head'. But the slight 29-year-old student of political science made only one comment: 'This is not a happy occasion'." Though >

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> the *Times* referred to "Meredith", the other characters in the story were called "Mr".

The president dutifully enforced the law, even if his position on civil rights was equivocal. The white South still voted Democrat and had helped give him his dubious victory in 1960. His instincts and his calculations were not necessarily in sync on this issue. Today, this all seems unimaginably primitive: in 2002 James Meredith's son, Joseph, was awarded a doctorate by Ole Miss, and named the leading student of his year, and no one did anything but smile. These times would form the backdrop to Kathryn Stockett's novel "The Help" (published 2009), which has become an international best-seller and a Hollywood film. Stockett's 1962 is very different from Ian McEwan's, but equally valid.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the political history of the 1960s has been written largely by and about the left. In 1962, an unusually strident right-wing Republican senator, Barry Goldwater of Arizona, was starting to make speeches and waves that would lead to his presidential candidacy in 1964 and his hefty defeat by JFK's successor, Lyndon Johnson. Which is another story. But there is an argument that Goldwater's rise had a more lasting impact on modern American politics than any anti-war protest.

"In 1962, no one dreamed Goldwater would be the Republican candidate," according to Michael Goldfarb. "No one had any idea what power there was in the West." The east coast, he says, was barely conscious of California until two of New York's three baseball teams, the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants, moved there in 1958. "Until then people thought California was a place you made movies and embarked for war in the Pacific. And Arizona...?"

Only the spread of air conditioning in the 1950s had made it slightly more habitable than the moon. When Goldwater was born, in Phoenix in 1909, Arizona was not even a state. But, from his failed run at the presidency, there stemmed Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, Sarah Palin and heaven-knows-who-might-be-next.

THE OTHER CULTURAL revolutions that lay ahead were still dormant, and would not even really be part of the Sixties. Homosexuality was still covert in all but the most artistic circles. Howard Schuman escaped conscription by telling the draft board about his sexuality: "My father was what we used to call a *New York Post* liberal, and he just loved that story, that I pretended to be gay." The possibility that his son was being honest appeared not to cross his mind.

The position of women at the time is best gleaned from minutiae. A *Punch* cartoon of a newspaper office showed the foreign desk with ringing phones and busy men rushing about doing important things. Next to them was the women's page, where a silly thing with a bouffant and bangles was calling over, waving a letter: "Any suggestions for 'Jilted'?"

In March 1962 Baroness Wootton, an academic sociologist who had become one of the first women to sit in the House of Lords, wrote to the *Times* saying she had received a letter from a university asking for a reference, specifically asking for a judgment "of the likely influence of Dr Hilda – *as a man* upon his students and colleagues".

The sisterhood, however, did not always help itself get taken seriously. The following appeared, amid the adverts for domestic help, in that venerable British institution the *Lady*: "Toes are sharp. Toes are once again rounded. Boots have returned to fashion. Shoes are increasing in popularity. Heels are high...are mid-high...are low...are stiletto-styled...are stacked. What's the truth of the footwear situation? Now is the time to get the news into perspective." That was the edition dated October 24th, the very day Jenny Diski sat fearfully on the beach.

But in other respects, the change was imminent. In the first week of January, "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" by the Tokens was top of the charts in America, and Danny Williams's version of "Moon River" in Britain. Both songs have proved highly durable, but would not now be described as cutting-edge. "Moon River" was followed by "The Young Ones" by the even more durable Cliff Richard and the Shadows.

Cliff (born 1940) had come to prominence in 1958 as the British answer to Elvis (though his fame has never dimmed, his life and career would head in very unElvis-like >

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> directions). This was five years ahead of the great explosion of British popular music. "In a funny way it was a disadvantage," notes the lyricist Sir Tim Rice (born 1944). "They were told they had to be all-round entertainers if they were to last: singing more adult songs, with orchestras, wearing a bow-tie, that sort of thing. Heading for Frank Sinatra territory."

Their records, including Cliff's, hardly ever made it into the American charts. Britain's popular music was in thrall to two separate cultural hegemonies: that of the United States, which was the overwhelming influence on youthful tastes, and the BBC which, bar the quasi-legal service from Radio Luxembourg, was the only source of music on the radio, and heavily constrained by "needle-time" agreements with the Musicians' Union. Pop on the BBC was confined to a few hours a week on the Light Programme, notably "Saturday Club" and "Pick of the Pops". Tim Rice remembers *Record Retailer* magazine listing the most-played records: "the No.1 would have about 11 or 12 plays a week".

There was a strange drabness to youth culture in the opening chapter of the Sixties. The edgy mid-Fifties cults of James Dean, the Angry Young Men, skiffle and coffee bars had passed; Bill Haley was old hat; Elvis had come out of the army and launched his ludicrous movie career. The British chart sensation of 1962 was a yodelling Australian, Frank Ifield. Another No.1 hit, "Come Outside" by Mike Sarne, concerned a bloke at a dance trying to get a bit of quick "slap-and-tickle" from his girlfriend because he had to get her home by 10.30. Most pop stars of 1962 looked as if they could be trusted to keep that sort of promise.

"THE VITAL INGREDIENT OF A BIG CULTURAL SHIFT IS THAT NO ONE SEES IT COMING," TIM RICE SAYS. "THERE WASN'T A LOT OF TEENAGE ANGST"

Didn't anyone see what was coming? "No," Tim Rice says. "The vital ingredient of any big cultural shift is that no one can see it coming. There didn't appear to be a lot of teenage angst." Researchers who investigated the attitudes of youth found themselves shocked by what the British educationalist Wayland Young called their "servility". Ferdynand Zweig, who surveyed students at Oxford and Manchester universities, said they were in danger of becoming "cautious adults at 20".

Yet in a sense it was obvious. There were signs in the late Fifties that the teenage market was becoming more powerful. And in its first issue of 1962 the American music-business weekly *Billboard* reported that sales of singles had hit an all-time high the previous year. The baby-boom had peaked in 1947, and mere demographics were bound to make the young more important. But few people grasped that. Special credit should perhaps go to a French senator, André Maroselli, who predicted in a 1962 essay that this growing generation would "inevitably" lead "the revolution of the Sixties".

BY THE END of the year even broader hints were being dropped, but no one was rushing to take them. Culturally if not politically, the revolution would be largely British-led. Already the postgraduate wit of "Beyond the Fringe" (Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Jonathan Miller and Alan Bennett) had reached Broadway to great acclaim, and New York cinemas were filled with gritty films depicting the working classes of northern England being blunt with each other ("A Taste of Honey", "A Kind of Loving", "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner"). "The suffering of the lower orders in England", sniffed the *New Yorker*, "is becoming a hackneyed subject."

In November, the spirit of "Beyond the Fringe" reached the BBC with the first edition of the satirical programme "That Was The Week That Was" (TW3), introduced by David Frost, which would transfix Britain for the next year. Those who were not around at the time sometimes catch old editions and wonder what the fuss was about. Well, firstly, it was the fact that these first glimmerings of the move from youthful servility via irreverence to rebellion were actually happening on the staid old BBC. And secondly, the timing was just magic. The weary and very unKennedyesque Conservative government of Harold Macmillan was about to enter its scandal-ridden final phase.

And something else was going on. I had just about given up my comics to read the *New Musical Express*, British pop's leading weekly. On October 26th, just after Khrushchev blinked and we all started to breathe a touch more easily, my copy arrived and, weirdly, I can remember it to this day.

The paper ran a weekly profile called "New to the Charts", and this one focused on a group whose single "Love Me Do" had just crept into the lower reaches of the Top 30. It was headed "Liverpool's Beatles wrote their own hit", which was then considered as novel as a talking dog. The piece comprised a few bland paragraphs: "Why are they called the Beatles? The boys laughingly put off the question by saying 'The name came to us in a vision'."

I bet that was John Lennon. And that little article was indeed a vision – one that was to prove far more influential than any of the words expended the same week on the sombre confrontation off the shores of Cuba. Before long protesters would cease being excruciatingly polite and rock singers would give up trying to be Frank Sinatra. The Beatles, who had gone along with the earlier conventions of pop, turned out to be the major catalyst in overturning them. Sexual intercourse would not just be invented but would catch on big-time, even among the Edwards and Florences. Everything was about to happen. Yeah, yeah, yeah. ■

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WHAT'S THE GREATEST INVENTION OF ALL TIME?

THE BIG QUESTION

We have been inventing things for millions of years. But which is the best of them? SAMANTHA WEINBERG draws up criteria, while five other writers make their choice

NEARLY TWO THOUSAND years ago, three elderly Chinese men sat in the gardens of Changle Palace, arguing about what was the greatest invention of all time.

"Tools made of rock," said one, banging his fist on the delicate carved table.

"Paper," said another, slamming the side of his hand.

"No, scissors!" cried the third, making chopping movements in the air. And so a game was invented.

This little tale is an invention too. We do not know exactly when Rock, Paper, Scissors was dreamed up, nor how, since in the time of Han there were fewer ways of recording the events of the day: no photographs (invented by Louis Daguerre in 1836), no sound recordings (the phonautograph was first used in 1857) and no reliable method of storing and passing on information (more of that later).

But the fact that the game existed then, and did not before, means that it is an invention. It may not be a contender for the greatest of all time, but rock, paper and scissors most certainly are. Inventions, for the purposes of this debate, are tangible – technologies and processes, rather than more nebulous things such as ideas, principles and imaginings. Children might feel that Father Christmas (first recorded in 1616) is the greatest invention of all time, but we are ruling him out.

Tools fashioned of rock, or stone, were probably the earliest inventions worthy of the name. First used in the Paleolithic Age, around 2.6m years ago, they mark an essential progression, from proto-human to human. With simple tools, fashioned by pummelling one piece of rock against another to produce a sharp edge, early man began to shape the world according to his needs, to build rudimentary shelters, to hunt and flay animals for food and clothing. Just about everything else followed from there. There is virtually nothing about the way we live today that would have been possible without those first stone tools.

But does longevity alone qualify stone tools for the crown? I'm not convinced; theirs was a long, slow grind to efficacy, and in most forms they've long been eclipsed. The blade, however – of which scissors are just a manifestation, albeit an ingenious one – has been in constant use since it was first invented at the start of the Ages of Metal, some 400,000 years ago. Think of knives, swords, spears, axes, the guillotine...uh-oh. Although we depend on the blade for much of what we now take for granted, from cutting up our food to making the electronics which crowd our daily life, there's a little too much of the chop and slash about blades to make them my greatest of all time. For a different view, see overleaf. >

> So how about the third of our Chinese gents' suggestions: paper? Invented by an imperial courtier named Ts'ai Lun in 105AD, it was deemed so precious and important that successive Chinese dynasties kept it secret for six centuries. Not something that the Dragons of today's Den, with their greedy eyes and piles of cash, would be inclined to do.

It is thanks to paper that we know about its invention. The ability to keep a written record is the foundation of mass learning. While the alphabet was invented around 2,000BC (at the same time as another useful device, the umbrella), it wasn't easy to pass around heavy stone tablets, or to manufacture and preserve papyrus scrolls in great numbers. The invention of paper led inexorably to books, the printing press, newspapers and magazines, to sacred texts, art, photography and music scores, handed down through generations. And yet, here we are at the dawn of what may, finally, become a paperless society. Paper may cover stone, but it is cut by scissors and burned by fire – another of the foundations of our society.

There are more. Tracing a line through time, you keep bumping into inventions that precipitate many others. Invention nearly always fulfils a need, but it is also an agent of change and how you measure that change depends on who you are and when you lived. Let's move our game to 1820s London; three learned gentlemen are gathered at the new headquarters of the Royal Society, in Burlington House, scratching their wigs over what was the greatest invention of the previous century.

"'Tis surely the internal combustion engine [1794]," said one, "for 'tis changing the nature of transport. Men and goods can move great distances in the wink of an eye."

"Nay! Consider vaccination [1796]," his friend responded. "Jenner's work is saving lives."

"Aye, and what of the electrical motor?" said the third. "The implications of what young Faraday is doing today will light up the lives of our grandchildren."

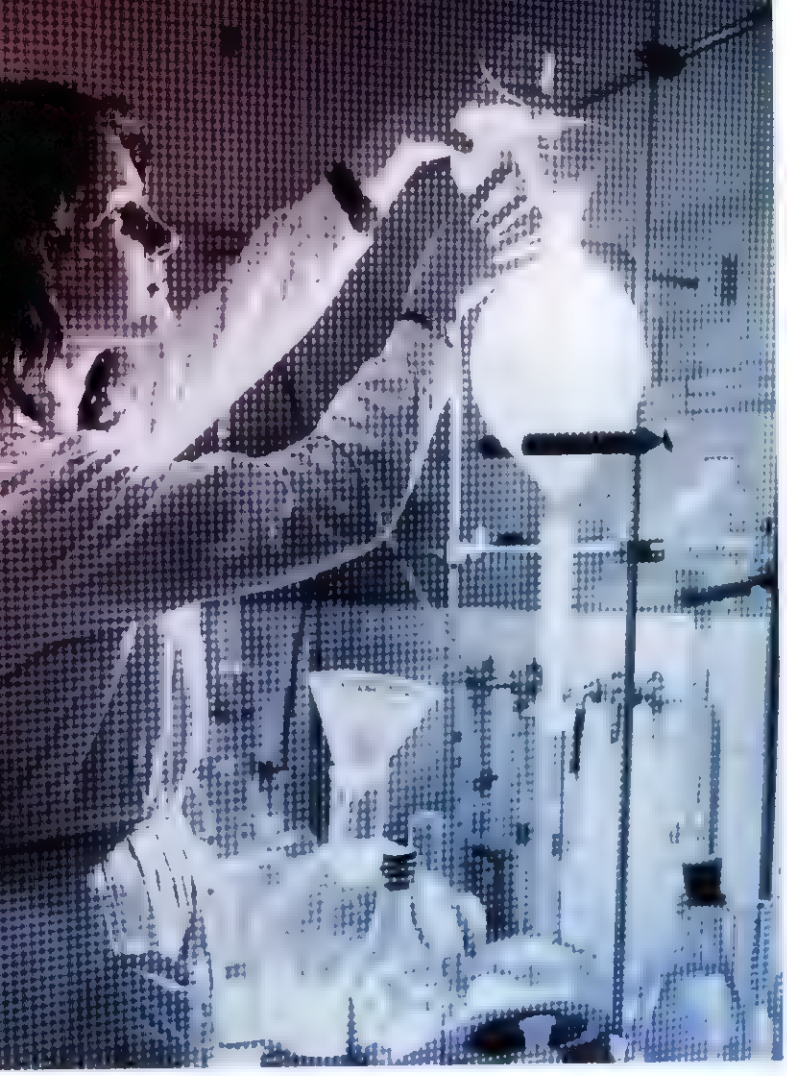
Three more worthy contenders. But change the cast again, and the suggestions will be different. Put women on the chairs, and we might vote for the contraceptive pill (Carl Djerassi, 1960) which, by handing us the responsibility for our own fertility, freed us to run our own lives. Blind people might point to Braille (1824), astronomers to the telescope (1609), miners to the safety lamp (1815). Around my kitchen table, the suggestions were diverse and revealing: the Xbox 360 (son, aged 11), the bridle (daughter, 9), and the iPad (father, 80). Or not so diverse in the case of the menfolk.

In December 1999, the writer and thinker Umberto Eco was asked to name his greatest inventions of the millennium. He plumped for four things: the stern-mounted rudder, without which, he said, "Columbus could not have sailed to America and the history of the millennium would have been rather different", and, more important than the rudder even, beans, peas and lentils. Pulses, in my book, although important both for nutrition and genetics, cross the line from invention to discovery, so they're out.

There is hardly any concrete thing in our world today that didn't start off as an invention, from the fish hook (c. 35,000BC) to a particular favourite of mine, the ice-rink cleaning machine (1948). The difficulty comes in picking the greatest. How do you measure the wheel against the space shuttle? I am taking the greatest to mean the invention that has had the greatest impact on the most people in a relatively immediate sense; power equals energy over time. And for that, we don't have to look very far back at all.

If I had been writing this article 22 years ago, it would have taken much longer. I would have had to traipse around libraries, wade through encyclopedias and newspaper cuttings, and bother a host of people with a stack of questions. Instead, I've been sitting at home, in front of a flickering fire (c. 1.4m BC), drinking tea (first recorded in the 10th century BC; teabags patented 1903), tapping at my laptop (1983), and distilling what I've found by trawling the world wide web.

In 1989, a youngish British physicist, Tim Berners-Lee, was trying to work out a way to share information with colleagues at the European particle physics laboratory, CERN (1954). They were already using the internet (1972), then a sort of scaled-up messaging facility that enabled files to be sent from one computer network to another. But Berners-Lee devised a way to store the pages in a central information bank, much like the great library of Alexandria (3rd century BC), only infinitely bigger.



Knowledge and information are in themselves of incalculable value, and sometimes danger, but the web is much, much more. Already this morning, I have performed all the vital functions of the home-worker: checked the weather forecast, bought a train ticket, played a game of Scrabble and sent a birthday message to a friend across the world. Thanks to the web, we can sit at home and be connected; we can work and be parents at the same time. I can share videos of my children with friends and family around the world, whether they like it or not, and send an article to a young scientist living in the Comoro Islands, halfway from Tanzania to Madagascar.

The web has transformed at least a dozen fields: education, news, book publishing, music, finance, networking, dating, charity donations, shopping, language-learning, cartography, medicine, hypochondria and the way we talk to friends. But above all it has fanned the movement for democratic change in countries whose inhabitants used to be hobbled by the fear that they were alone. The web enabled them to reach out, find support at home and abroad, and muster the courage to overthrow their tyrants. It helped them bring in the promise, at least, of a brighter dawn. Ask a young Egyptian, Tunisian or Libyan to name the greatest invention, and they might well choose the world wide web.

Paper covers rock, rock smashes scissors, scissors cut paper, but the web trumps them all.

SO, WHAT IS THE GREATEST INVENTION OF ALL TIME?

THE BLADE
Edward Carr

Go into the kitchen and find a chopping board, a tomato – not too ripe – and your favourite knife. To be sure that the knife is sharp, run the tip of your finger down the edge and feel it catch the tiny ridges on your skin. Place the tomato on the board and draw the blade across it. At first, you will sense the surface resistance, then a slight give as blade eases through flesh to the board beneath, like the keel of a boat running into the sand.

The stainless-steel blade in your hand barely differs from the sharp-edged flint and obsidian that our ancestors knapped from a core of rock two or three million years ago. The first flints were scrapers and knives for skinning and butchering animals. Larger stones, fixed to wooden handles, served as axes for chopping and adzes for smoothing rough wood. The smallest became arrowheads and spear-tips. From the beginning, technology both brought life and took it away.

The blade is so familiar that we tend to overlook its technical refinement. Pressure equals force divided by area: the thin surface at the cutting edge concentrates moderate forces into extreme pressures. By minimising the area, the teeth of a serrated blade concentrate the force still further. With a blunt knife, you have to exert a large force to make a cut – and you have a squashed tomato. But a sharp one can give us a surgeon's incision; axes and saws generate enough pressure to slice through trees and rock; fine wires shave off a wafer of silicon for etching integrated circuits.

Some technologies, like steam-power and the candle, have come and mostly gone. Others have been optional – the Incas, Aztecs and Native Americans got by without the wheel. Only the blade has been with people everywhere and throughout history. In fact, as the first tool, the blade opened a new world bursting with unimagined possibilities – and we are not done exploring them yet. Elegant and enduring, the blade was the breakthrough on which everything else is built.

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD
Roger Highfield

All great inventions rest on understanding how things work. And the greatest of all is the über-invention that has provided the insights on which other inventions depend: the modern scientific method, the realisation that we cannot grasp the way the world works by rational thought alone.

To gain meaningful insights into the scheme of things, logic has to be accompanied by asking probing questions of nature. To advance understanding, we need to devise rational conjectures and probe them to destruction through controlled >

> tests, precise observations and clever analysis. The upshot is an unending dialogue between theory and experiment.

Unlike a traditional invention, the scientific method did not come into being at a particular time: its history is complex and stretches back long before 1833, when the term "scientist" was coined by the English polymath William Whewell. The method is not a concrete gadget like Gutenberg's press, the computer or the Pill. Nor is it a brainwave like the non-geocentric universe, the Indo-Arab counting system or the theory of evolution. It is a fecund way of thinking on which the modern world rests. In relatively few generations, the rigorous application of the method has bootstrapped modern society through a non-linear accumulation of both knowledge and technology. Its impact on everyday life is ubiquitous and indisputable, even though a surprising number of people, including some senior politicians, have only a feeble grasp of its significance.

As one example, let's look forward a few decades to an invention which is destined to end the energy crisis, change the global economy and curb climate change at a stroke: commercial fusion power. This invention, like nearly all others, is inconceivable without the scientific method, in this case the insights that it gives into the process by which the Sun and other stars transmute matter, transforming hydrogen into helium to release astounding amounts of energy. This invention will rest on the application of a diverse range of scientific insights, whether in the creation of reactor materials that can withstand unbelievable pummelling by subatomic particles or the design of affordable superconducting magnets that can confine plasma ten times hotter than the Sun's core.

The scientific method has changed life, culture and everything, and set the stage for a reassessment of our place in the universe. It is the mother of all invention.

WRITING
Tom Standage

The greatest invention of all must surely be writing. It is not just one of the foundations of civilisation: it underpins the steady accumulation of intellectual achievement. By capturing ideas in physical form, it allows them to travel across space and time without distortion, and thus slip the bonds of human memory and oral transmission, not to mention the whims of tyrants and the vicissitudes of history.

Its origins are prosaic: it was invented by accountants, not poets, in the 4th millennium BC, as a spur of the counting system with which farming societies kept track of agricultural goods. At first transactions were recorded by storing groups of shaped clay tokens – representing wheat, cattle or textiles – in clay envelopes. But why use tokens when pressing one into a tablet of wet clay would do instead? These impressions, in turn, were superseded by symbols scratched or punched into the clay with a stylus. Tokens had given way to writing.

As human settlements swelled from villages to the first cities, writing was needed for administrative reasons. But it quickly became more flexible and expressive, capable of capturing the subtleties of human thought, not just lists of rations doled out or kings long dead. And this allowed philosophers, poets and chroniclers to situate their ideas in relation to those of previous thinkers, to argue about them and elaborate upon them. Each generation could build on the ideas of its forebears, making it possible for there to be species-wide progress in philosophy, commerce, science and literature.

The amazing thing about writing, given how complicated its early systems were, is that anyone learned it at all. The reason they did is revealed in the ancient Egyptian scribal-training texts, which emphasise the superiority of being a scribe over all other career choices, with titles like "Do Not Be Soldier, Priest or Baker", "Do Not Be a Husbandman" and "Do Not Be a Charioteer". This last text begins: "Set thine heart on being a scribe, that thou mayest direct the whole earth." The earliest scribes understood that literacy was power – a power that now extends to most of humanity, and has done more for human progress than any other invention.

THE TRANSISTOR RADIO
Nnaemeka Ikegwuonu

The greatest invention of all is the transistor radio (and radio wave signals), first developed by Bell Laboratories in the 1940s. I admire straightforward technology that solves complex, human problems. Where there are still holes in the web, radio waves travel powerfully around the world.

IMAGE: ALAMY, GETTY PANOS

And one of the wonderful things about the transistor is that it is portable.

Spreading conversations to improve access to knowledge and quality of life is a huge task. Information opens the mind and motivates the spirit. A more informed person can make a better choice. Radio is the only way to reach so many people at the same time with the same information. It made news instant. It changed the way we listened to music. It spoke the language of the people. In rural Africa, where I live, radio is still the most pervasive, accessible, affordable and flexible mass medium. It gives people a louder voice to air and solve agricultural problems, improve farm production, strengthen specialist knowledge in their communities, protect their health and reduce poverty.

Radio is sustainable, interactive and inclusive. Even illiterate smallholder farmers can suddenly be both heard and informed. They can shape opinions, enjoy the give-and-take of informed dialogue and become decisive agents in their industry's development. People tend to relate to information best when it originates from their own communities.

I was inspired to launch a network that gives poor rural farmers, especially women, daily access to information on crop production, livestock rearing, soil management, national and international markets. This information is used to negotiate with traders, to decide whether to go to market, and which market to visit or supply. It has been used to analyse prices over time, to help make decisions about diversifying or producing out-of-season crops. It can even be used to help subsistence farmers find opportunities for alternative income. Educational programmes broadcast over simple radios have improved crop and livestock yield and household income.

THE FLUSH TOILET

Nick Valéry

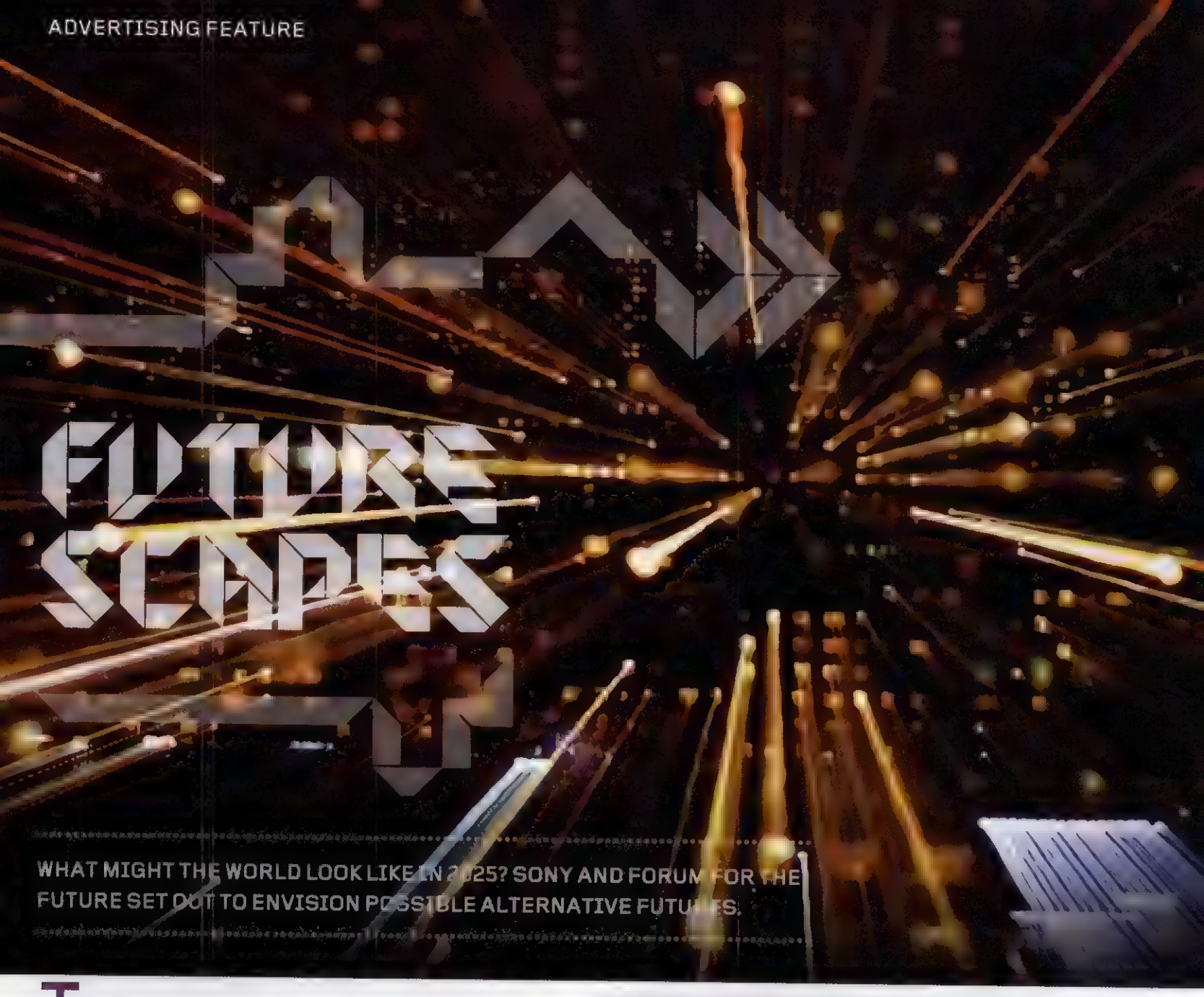
More even than the miracle of antibiotics, the flush toilet has done most to rid us of infectious disease. Without plumbed sanitation within the home to dispose of human waste, we would still be living in a brutal age of cholera, dysentery, typhus and typhoid fever – to say nothing of bubonic plague.

The flush toilet was invented, and re-invented, many times. Indoor toilets first appeared in the Indus Valley over 4,000 years ago. The Romans built their latrines over drains carrying running water that discharged into a fetid Tiber. Legend has it that Queen Elizabeth I was too embarrassed to use the flush toilet built for her by her godson, Sir John Harington, for fear that the roar of the rushing water would inform the palace of the royal bowels being evacuated.

But it is only in the past century and a half that the water closet has graced more humble abodes. After Prince Albert died of typhoid in 1861, a grief-stricken Queen Victoria demanded that piped water and sewage treatment be installed throughout Britain. A decade later, her son Prince Edward came close to dying of the same disease, and word about the need for flush toilets went out across the land. From Britain, it spread to France, and thence the rest of Europe and the world.

The father of the modern lavatory was not, as myth would have it, Thomas Crapper, whose name, in blue Gothic script, embellished the inside of many a Victorian lavatory bowl. If anyone can lay claim to the title, it is Alexander Cummings, a watchmaker in Bond Street, who was granted the first patent for a flush toilet in 1775. The popular toilets made by Crapper's workshop in Chelsea were based on a later siphon design, patented in 1819 by an employee named Albert Giblin.

The lavatory has changed little since Crapper's time. Water trapped in an s-shaped bend keeps the stench at bay, while allowing the waste to be siphoned off. Pulling a chain, or pressing a handle, opens a valve that causes water in a cistern to gush into the bowl. When it is empty, a floating ballcock closes the valve, and the tank refills under pressure from the water supply. Tweaks over the years have simplified the valve system and reduced the water needed. The flushing toilet still hasn't reached everyone, but it has done billions a great service. ■



FUTURE SCAPES

WHAT MIGHT THE WORLD LOOK LIKE IN 2025? SONY AND FORUM FOR THE FUTURE SET OUT TO ENVISION POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE FUTURES.

In July 1969, as Armstrong and Aldrin spacehopped through lunar dustfields, Zager and Evans ruminated on how our planet might develop over the next ten millennia in their hit tune In The Year 2525. En route to the song's redemptive conclusion, evolution killed off teeth, eyes, husbands, wives, arms and legs.

Imagining different futures is a useful way of bringing creativity to the process of resolving today's thornier challenges, but long-range forecasting is a frustratingly inexact business. That's why it wasn't part of the brief when Sony and sustainability specialists Forum For The Future convened 'FutureScapes', a creative, open collaboration exploring the potential of technology to support new, sustainable lifestyles in the future.

Working to a more accessible target of 2025, and drawing on the most eclectic spread of lifestyle and tech perspectives, FutureScapes sets out to envision possible alternative futures and to identify the social and environmental contributions that technology might make in a world of 8 billion souls.

From the infinite number of futures ahead of us, four 2025 scenarios were selected as useful 'thought starters'. These scenarios demonstrate that the passage of millennia isn't a pre-requisite for major change. A lot can happen in just fourteen years.

Scenario 1: Hyper Innovation

In this 'golden age' scenario, innovation has created a high-tech, low carbon economy that's not only cleaning up the planet but also delivering sustainable growth.

Laboratory-grown meat and the wonder material graphene have brought big changes in diet, computers, 'smart' packaging and energy technology. African solar power is being exported to Europe. Road lighting is generated by the wind of passing cars. Ambient personal energy harvesting complements virtual concierges which micro-manage domestic energy consumption.

On a human level, extreme personalisation and extreme individuality are key aspirations. Gadgets rule. Competition is huge, product ranges vast and fragmented and consumption conspicuous, but the increasingly frantic pace of innovation is creating a sense of digital fatigue, a sense of disconnection from nature and recurring unrest among those who can't afford to keep up. Pressure groups balking at the pace of progress and questioning its impact on mental health gain traction when resources come under threat – as they occasionally do in a world of unresolved eco issues surrounding water, pollution and waste – but their protestations are drowned out by the next wave of innovation.

Volatility is as much a feature of the weather as it is of the markets, but presents both a challenge and an opportunity for developers of new technology. But being able

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> The passage of millennia isn't a pre-requisite for major change. A lot can happen in just fourteen years.

to make or have made whatever you fancy (as long as it's low energy) makes up for a lot in this high-efficiency world.

Scenario 2: Shared ownership

Global water and fuel shortages have depopulated huge areas and funnelled mankind into mega-cities where energy can be more efficiently generated and managed. Individual gardens are rare, but well-designed communal spaces are a positive consequence of the car's drop-off in popularity. Peer-to-peer car sharing offsets high ownership costs.

This is a world in which global governments have foreseen climate instability and instigated carbon limitation measures to defuse its consequences. The results are high carbon costs – and an entirely new perception of ownership.

Many items that previously would have been owned now form the core of a burgeoning rental and leasing market. Bikes, electronic goods and even clothes follow this new 'share with your neighbour' philosophy.

Open source software seeds a blossoming of 'personal factories' where individuals can design, create and ship products. Reusability and adaptability are the keys to successful commodity design. Experience, both real and virtual, has attained quasi-currency status. Online connection is constant, and permanent.

Resonating with a big growth in social bartering sites like Favabank, companies are repositioning their business models to sell services rather than products. People get what they need without the accompanying liabilities of ownership or maintenance. The carbon-credit rich can indulge in a 'real' 2010s-style culture, but the majority in this service transformation scenario are happy to accept sustainable living as the only option.

Though the underlying perception of augmented and virtual realities is that they are ersatz, this technology transforms physically-drab workplaces into luscious environments, 'makes' spectacular clothing, and provides an affordable alternative to authentic holidays while babysitters supplied by reputation networks mind the kids. Best of all, the drudgery of traffic jams and queuing has been consigned to history.

Scenario 3: Centralised survival

Unchecked climate change has brought a rude awakening. Catastrophic weather events in 2019 and 2020 have wrought havoc across southern Europe and the American southwest. Severe droughts have killed thousands, devastated crops and decimated food reserves.

The drastic solution is a forced refocusing on climate change, enabled by a 2021 global pact on carbon reduction programmes. Strict carbon monitoring reaches right into individual homes.

A 'Blitz spirit' acceptance of the need for change is mirrored by an acceptance of the need for regulation by the all-seeing eye of the World Energy Monitoring Corporation. Carbon quotas are tradeable items, giving rise to a new generation of carbon tycoons whose activities are paternalistically checked both by the WEM and by pressure groups pushing for a fairer allocation of carbon resources.

For the population at large, a system of self-reliance, bartering and locally-grown foods credibly complements the sustainable lifestyle that's already been enabled by global energy controls. Real-world constraints have produced creative spikes in virtual worlds, art, music and writing. Technology supports escapism, with product design values switching from showiness to durability as governments push manufacturers to the limit of what they can deliver. Power consumption must be low. Acoustic and kinetic power-harvesting methods are intensely exploited. Even home rowing machines are plugged into the grid. Energy monitoring and management technologies are essential to the fair functioning of this world, as are more traditional human qualities like community, localism, and patriotism.

Scenario 4: Prosperity redefined

After the 'lost decade' of austerity from 2009-2018, consumerism has been displaced by a new mindset driven by a fundamental shift in values.

In this world, the fixation with production and GDP has given way to a scaling-down of consumption and a new creed of prosperity without growth. Energy is expensive and disposable income levels small, but Government-encouraged exchange networks and renting services have created a functional and high quality social environment in which time and favours supplant money.

The youth-inspired switch from debt and materialism to the development of stronger personal relationships has had a major impact on the sales of cars and other 'big' tech-goods. Those that are owned are expected to be durable and to offer more than one function. They must be operable by any member of an extended family living together in the same house.

Technology still has an important role in servicing more localised communities, but in this world of redefined progress, technology is the servant, not the master. It speaks to personal wellbeing as well as communication, with bio-sensors feeding health data to other family members.

Long-distance travel has become prohibitively expensive, but society's growing interest in cultural mobility and global business collaboration is fulfilled at home by faux-travel through a virtual window linked to the local cloud.

Working from home has become a reality for many, too, and part-time working is mainstream. Personal development and creativity are both highly prized. Volunteering is popular, and open-sourcing the norm in both design and manufacturing. People are healthier and happier, and have more spare time. The mantra for this scenario is 'better understanding, and better communication'.

How other-worldly would our lives be in these contrasting versions of 2025? How might new technologies help us live to the full?

As part of the ongoing FutureScapes project, the Economist Intelligence Unit will be writing thought pieces on future-focused topics that will explore the many different possibilities of a world of 2025.

Choose knowingly. For more information visit:
http://www.businessresearch.eiu.com/futurescapes.html

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LIFE AND FATE AND TINY JAPANESE FIGURES

Edmund de Waal's book about his family and their netsuke has become an international phenomenon. Fiammetta Rocco follows him to Vienna to hear the inside story of its creation, and finds the saga continuing –

THEY WERE WELL into the wine before they started telling stories. All day long the delegates at the 2005 Harvard conference on 20th-century studio ceramics had been listening to presentations on the Mingei movement in Japan, debating the role of folk art and the importance of Bernard Leach, a British potter who settled in Japan and became very influential. But as the main course was cleared away, those sitting at a table to one side of the room became captivated by a tale being recounted by another British potter, Edmund de Waal. It was about the Japanese netsuke his family had bought in the 1870s. Within half a century, they were one of the richest in Vienna, with a grand house on the Ringstrasse. At the Anschluss in 1938 the netsuke disappeared; stolen, the family thought. It was only after the war that they discovered they'd been hidden from the Nazis by a faithful servant, Anna. "This would make such a great book," said Michael Goldfarb, a New York collector and one of those listening. "Edmund, you've got to stop talking and start writing. This is the book you were born to write."

Published in June 2010, "The Hare with Amber Eyes" has become the most successful family memoir of the decade. The tale of the vitrine of little Japanese figures passed down >

PHOTOGRAPH **JONATHAN ROOT**

> through five generations of the same family, from Paris to Vienna to Tunbridge Wells and Tokyo and back to south London, has seen 63,500 copies printed in hardback, 376,000 in paperback, and now there is an illustrated edition too, priced at £25. And that's just in Britain.

"The Hare with Amber Eyes" has been translated into 22 languages; not just the obvious ones to do with the story, like German and Hebrew, but also Serbian, Finnish and Chinese. When the book came out in Germany, it sold so fast that it had to be reprinted repeatedly in the first six weeks. In Austria it topped the bestseller list two months before its launch.

It is hard to know what makes a bestseller. If it were easy, no publisher would have turned down "We Need to Talk About Kevin" or Harry Potter. Yet dozens did. And so it was with "The Hare with Amber Eyes". Eight British publishing houses passed on it. Only one bid came in for the book when the proposal was submitted. Yet from the very start, reviewers and readers were united in their embrace of this intimate story of a lost family and a lost time. Waterstone's, one book chain, failed to order it at first, but the reading public defied its lack of imagination. The book sold by word of mouth and with the enthusiastic backing of independent booksellers who did what good booksellers are meant to do: they read it, recommended it and re-ordered copies, over and over again.

FOR YEARS Edmund de Waal has worked alone. First with his hands, practising throwing pots, and then in his head, memorising Japanese *kanji* characters and learning to be a writer. Even now that he has become well known, he is uneasy in the spotlight. He starts and restarts his sentences, gathering up the words and rearranging them as if his phrases were inelegant pots to be scrapped and thrown afresh. "The longer I live with the book, the more I go on thinking about it and talking about it, the more I really do register that there is something extraordinarily basic about it. There's the journey element, that arc of going in search of something that's hidden. But the real heart of the book is that thing about family silences, about not knowing something about your family. That, I think, is common to everyone."

Family silences are a way of controlling secrets, assuaging fears, leaving behind the terrors of the past. But what happens when the silence is broken? Who owns the story then? From whom is it taken? And to whom is it given?

"The Hare with Amber Eyes" describes the rise and fall of one family in Europe. Having written about them, the author was faced with the unintended consequences of his discoveries: that just as every national history belongs in a different way to every nation, so every family story belongs to each relation, and every narrative contains elements claimed in equal measure by the teller and the told.

In the de Waal family, third-born Edmund was the free spirit. A natural scholar who got a first at Cambridge, he could have been an academic but instead became a potter. Two of his brothers, Alex (older) and Tom (younger), are the writers. In the family narrative, Edmund the potter was never meant to become Edmund the writer, never mind the bestselling chronicler of the family's story, star turn at literary festivals and the darling of book groups up and down the country.

EDMUND DE WAAL first saw the hare with amber eyes and the 263 other netsuke when he was 17. They perched in a glass vitrine in a flat in Tokyo that his gay great-uncle Iggie shared with his friend Jiro Sugiyama. "I thought they were precious, fiddly, horrid little objects," says de Waal. "But they have been in my life now for 30 years, and I have begun to have a different relationship with them." The netsuke had been bought as a job lot in Paris a century earlier by de Waal's great-great-uncle, Charles Ephrussi, who was Proust's patron. It was the moment when *Japonisme*, the first wave of European Japanomania, took hold in France, in the 1870s. When Ephrussi grew tired of them, on the cusp of the new century, he packed them up – along with two other more important family gifts – as a wedding present to his cousin, Viktor, by then Viktor von Ephrussi, Iggie's father, who had moved up in the world, from Odessa to Vienna.

Iggie's three siblings, all born in Vienna like him, would die variously in Monmouth, Mexico and New York City. Iggie himself would die in Tokyo in 1994, having first become an American and fought with the allies in the second world war. Odessa, Paris, Vienna: the mansions that the Ephrussis built in the great cities of Europe stand as elegant milestones in the dark tumult of the 20th century, when a family of grain traders from the Black Sea rose to become bankers as rich as the Rothschilds, first in Paris and then in Vienna.

The two other family wedding gifts to Viktor and his young bride, Emmy Schey von Koromla, were a Dutch Old Master painting of two ships in a gale and a beautiful Louis XVI marquetry desk with tapering legs ending in little gilt hooves. Grand and showy, these were easy pieces to place in the elegant palais the Ephrussis built on Vienna's opulent Ringstrasse, a place so popular with newly wealthy Jews it was known as Zionstrasse. The netsuke were more of a problem. They were small and full of secrets; their vitrine less a showcase for display than for opening, reaching in and picking up – "a moment of seduction, an encounter between a hand and an object that is electric," de Waal would write later. The netsuke found a home in Emmy's dressing room, where the children used to take them out and play.

Forty years later, the Palais Ephrussi was invaded by the Gestapo who smashed the furniture and carried away the

IGGIE WOULD PICK AT THE THREADS OF THE PAST, UNVEILING MEMORIES ONLY TO LET THE CURTAIN FALL UPON THEM ONCE MORE

paintings, the globes in the library and the suites of Meissen porcelain. Only the netsuke were saved. As German stormtroopers emptied drawers and cupboards and Nazi art historians made inventories of works that might appeal to Hitler, Emmy's lady's maid, Anna, opened the vitrine and took down the netsuke, hiding them in small handfuls in the pockets of her apron. Downstairs in her narrow room, she pushed them inside the horsehair of her mattress and sewed it up. It took her two weeks to gather them to safety. Seven years afterwards, in 1945, Emmy's daughter, Elisabeth, returned to Vienna. The Palais Ephrussi was by then the offices of the American occupying authorities. The lieutenant in charge knew a woman who had worked in the house before the war. Anna retrieved the netsuke from their horsehair sanctuary and Elisabeth took them back with her to Tunbridge Wells. No one knows what became of Anna. No one even knows her surname.

By the time Edmund was born, in 1964, the family had been in Britain for more than a quarter of a century, and felt themselves to be English through and through. Edmund's father, the Rev Dr Victor de Waal (named after his grandfather, Viktor), had become an Anglican convert, a Cambridge vicar who was appointed the 37th dean of Canterbury cathedral. The four de Waal boys grew up with English hearts, fed on cricket and sacred music.

"My father, chaplain of King's College [Cambridge], dean of Canterbury. And my uncle Constant, who becomes Sir Henry de Waal, QC, Parliamentary Counsel. You couldn't get two more conventional Englishmen. And yet they both have this unknown hinterland," de Waal explains. Here and there a glimpse of a Mitteleuropean heritage: Victor consciously spelt the English way despite his antecedent; a handful of flimsy, desperate letters between Elisabeth de Waal and her parents, Viktor and Emmy, who were trapped in Vienna after the Nazi invasion in 1938. The Anglican reverend never spoke of his family history to his sons. Yet when Elisabeth died, Victor de Waal, "born in Amsterdam with a childhood everywhere in Europe, stood in his Benedictine-black, rabbinical-black cassock and recited the Kaddish for his mother in the English parish church near her nursing home." And when Dr de Waal had himself painted for the Canterbury deanery, he asked to be portrayed not as an English clergyman but in the manner of his ancestors, as a Jewish rabbi.

The netsuke that Victor de Waal remembered from his childhood visits to the Palais Ephrussi had been brought to England by Elisabeth after the war, given to her brother, Iggie, who took them "home" to Japan. When Iggie died in 1994, Jiro Sugiyama and Edmund packed up his things. Jiro then took out his brush and ink and wrote a document and sealed it. It said that, in due course, Edmund should look after the netsuke.

EDMUND DE WAAL was five years old when he learned to mould clay. He badgered his father to take him to an evening class, and soon he would steal off every day after school to a pottery workshop and throw pots. He was like a musical prodigy, turning the wheel instead of practising arpeggios. After Cambridge he spent seven years perfecting his pots in "silent, ordered studios" on the Welsh borders. He summered in Japan, tracking down the "severe masters in pottery villages across the country", and sat with his great-uncle Iggie and Jiro in their Tokyo sitting room with the vitrine of netsuke, listening while Iggie picked at the threads of the past, unveiling memories only to let the curtain fall upon them once more.

Long before he knew how he wanted to write down his family story, Edmund de Waal had made up his mind what he did not want to write. He did not want it to be biography with its "slightly clammy feeling", its "sense of living on the >

> edges of other people's lives without their permission". Nor did he want "to get into the sepia saga business, writing up some elegiac Mitteleuropa narrative of loss".

"It would come out as nostalgic. And thin." He felt he was "not entitled to nostalgia about all that lost wealth and glamour from a century ago". He was "not interested in thin". And so he stuck to the shallows, dipping about in the safety of art history and facts. He became a flâneur in Charles Ephrussi's Paris, hung out with his younger brother, Tom, in Odessa, burrowed about in libraries, and made lists of the netsuke:

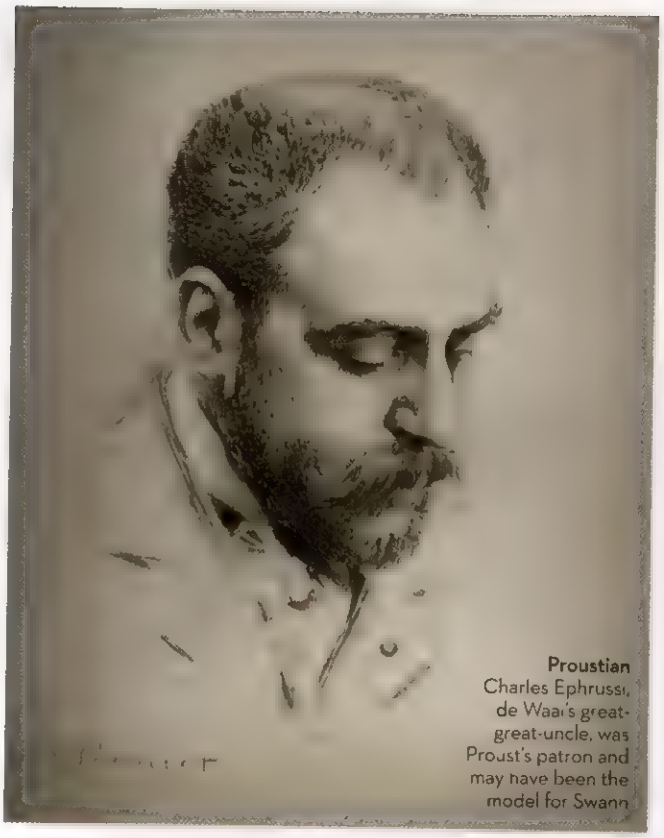
A fox with inlaid eyes, in wood
A curled snake on a lotus leaf, in ivory
A boxwood hare and the moon
A standing warrior
A sleeping servant
Children playing with masks
Children playing with puppies
Children playing with a samurai helmet
Three toads on a leaf
Dozens of ivory rats.

Rats were popular, he wrote, "perhaps because they give the maker the chance to wrap those sinuous tails round each other, over the pails of water, the dead fish, the beggars' robes, and then fold those paws underneath the carvings." The more he held them, the more de Waal learned about the netsuke. "Hard and tricky and Japanese," they are, he decided finally, "a small, tough explosion of exactitude". They deserved "this kind of exactitude in return".

When he came to write it all up, though, it sounded a little like something from a university cultural-studies programme. "It was 'can I provide a really accurate bit of cultural history about where things have been and if things had been, and make it communicable to other people?' That was my way of protecting myself. And then, of course, it all fell apart."

He wrote eight chapters and found he could not go on. "They were written in this slightly arch, rather professional, detached way, a bit wry, a bit knowing. And completely removed from what was going on. It was just phoney. I read it and it was completely phoney. It was just a construct... You're a writer for goodness sake. You know when it doesn't ring true at all. I hated writing it. I was absolutely hating writing it."

So he began again. He took inspiration from Vasily Grossman, who had written one of the greatest novels of the second world war, "Life and Fate". Like Joseph Conrad and the Ephrussis, Grossman came originally from Berdichev in the Pale of Settlement. His own family story there had taught him that "we can survive anything if we have stories to tell." Drawing both on the exacting nature of the netsuke themselves and the muddled human experience of those who had owned them, de Waal set off afresh on his polemic against nostalgia and melancholy. "Part of the complexity was to navigate my way between the stuff and the story, because there's the stuff and there's the story, and sometimes they match each other and sometimes they don't." Writing was still hard, but the hard part this time was different. It was Vienna in 1938.



Proustian
Charles Ephrussi, de Waal's great-great-uncle, was Proust's patron and may have been the model for Swann

To write that climactic chapter, de Waal took himself off with his dog to a small cottage he and his wife had bought years before, on the Ardnamurchan peninsula on the west coast of Scotland. By day, he walked the beaches with the dog and arranged and rearranged his thoughts. By night, he wrote, ticking off the crucial dates of that fateful spring almost as they unfolded: 1938, March 10th, hopes high for the plebiscite on Austria's independence. March 11th, German troops cross the border. Nazi flags hung from government ministries. March 12th, Austria declared National Socialist. The first Jewish shop windows broken. Youths in swastika armbands swarm through the Palais Ephrussi, ransacking closets and tipping the globes from their stands. Viktor and Emmy pushed against the wall. The marquetry desk, which came with the netsuke as a wedding present from Paris, heaved over the handrail, the wood, gilt and marquetry splintering on the stone flags of the courtyard two floors below.

In March and April 1938, 160 Jews committed suicide. Jews working in theatres and orchestras were summarily dismissed, as were state and municipal employees. Jewish teachers, lawyers and public prosecutors lost their jobs too. Frozen in indecision, Viktor, Emmy and Anna huddled in three

rooms. On April 23rd, the Gestapo arrived. "They started out quite polite," de Waal wrote. "They asked for keys, rifled through the little tables in the salon, swept through the catalogues in the library, reached into the linen closets and jerked away the tapestries from the wall. They searched the 24 rooms in the family apartment, and opened up the safe, the silver-room and the porcelain store where the plates were stacked, service by service."

Viktor and his son were arrested. Three days later Viktor signed it all away, "the Palais and its contents and all his other properties in Vienna, the accumulation of all the diligence of the family, a hundred years of possessions," de Waal wrote. The netsuke nestled within Anna's mattress, and 30 of the Ephrussi pictures were marked for redistribution to museums, stolen by the Nazis.

On April 27th, the property at 14 Dr Karl Lueger Ring, Vienna 1, formerly the Palais Ephrussi, was declared fully Aryanised. Six weeks after the plebiscite the family had been cleansed from the city. Years later de Waal returned to the Jewish archive in Vienna and looked up Viktor von Ephrussi. There was a red stamp across his first name. It read "Israel". Someone had gone through every name on the list of Viennese Jews and stamped them with new names: "Israel" for the men, "Sara" for the women. The family had not been erased, he wrote, but written over. "Finally, it is this that made me cry."

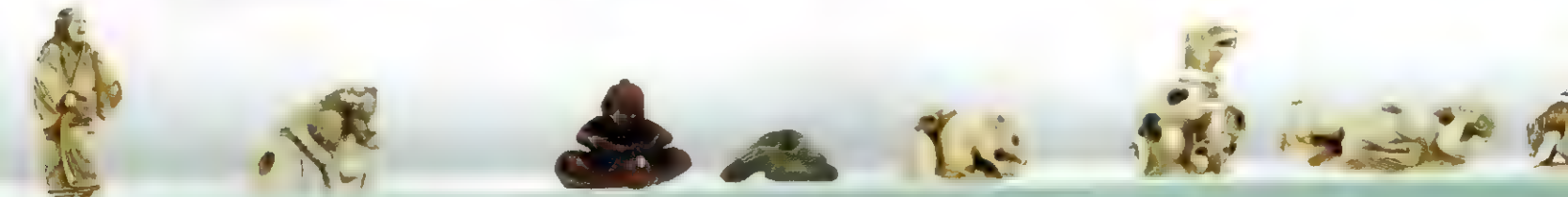
ON APRIL 27TH 1938, THE PROPERTY AT 14 DR KARL LUEGER RING, VIENNA 1, FORMERLY THE PALAIS EPHRUSSI, WAS DECLARED FULLY ARYANISED

TALKING IN HIS south London studio, de Waal picks up the thread of how he came to write his book. "The idea of writing in a much more exposed way was pretty alarming. And rightly, as it turned out, because [I know] having written this bloody book, [that] it's completely exposing. Ludicrously exposing." He had solved the problem of trying to be an author when he stopped writing a book and started telling a story. That is what readers have responded to in "The Hare with Amber Eyes". But the exposure of being published brought him new challenges.

The first came from his younger brother, Tom, the expert on Odessa who had long thought that he might write the Ephrussi story himself. Neither brother will speak in detail about what passed between them. Shock at the book's success certainly seems to have played a part for Tom de Waal and a feeling of being supplanted as a chronicler, being robbed of the possibility of something. "There were mixed feelings on my part," is all he will say. He had once written his own proposal for a book about Odessa and the Ephrussi family, but publishers who saw it thought it was "too diffuse". When he was sent the manuscript of "The Hare with Amber Eyes" to read, Tom de Waal felt his input hadn't been sufficiently recognised, and he asked that the wording be changed. The brothers no longer speak about this particular subject though Tom still hopes to write his Odessa book one day. "For Tom, who went on some of the travels with me and knew Odessa inside out, it's been particularly personal," Edmund de Waal says. "But I don't think that not writing something helps other people write things. I really will go to the wall on that one."

And then there was the public. The French objected to de Waal's claim that his great-great-uncle Charles Ephrussi, Proust's patron, had been the model for Charles Swann. "It was a sense of impropriety, that an Englishman should consider that Proust was available to be written about." One reviewer could read no further than the Proust chapter. The French publishers also seemed to miss the point, giving the book a silly, anodyne title, "La Mémoire Retrouvée". In France the book has been a rare failure.

In America, de Waal found that as an Anglican with a Jewish background married to a woman of Quaker stock, he faced questions of a different nature. His book tour opened at the Jewish Museum in New York, where he reached into his pocket and pulled out the hare with amber eyes. "Can I interest you in looking at a hare?" he asked the crowd. But all they wanted to know was about being Jewish. "You've written this book. So what does it mean for you?" one reader asked. "Does this mean you're Jewish? Does it mean you're back in the community? Does that mean you are bringing your children up as Jewish?" He found himself unprepared for the intense religious nosiness ("no one would dream of asking that in England"), and left audiences unconvinced when he told them, "I certainly do feel, having done this journey, very conscious of >



> my Jewishness, which is a significant part of me. But the reality is that I don't know. I am still in a right muddle over all that."

And then there is the issue of Nazi looting. In contrast with Britain, in America "The Hare with Amber Eyes" has been held up as a book about the penalties and pain of restitution, he says, "about why people give up and others think it's still worth attempting to heal something, attempting to make a bridge with a lost past, attempting to try and connect with a bit of family history that's been taken away."

In the 18 months since the book came out, de Waal has completed six overseas book tours, given dozens of talks, answered hundreds if not thousands of questions. He has also kept his porcelain-making studio busy and has plans for a subsequent book, about the history of porcelain around the world, which will take him from 18th-century Plymouth to the hillsides outside Jingdezhen where porcelain was first made in China, via Dresden, Marco Polo's Venice, Istanbul and Yemen. "Porcelain", he says, "is light when most things are heavy. It rings clear when you tap it. You can see the sunlight shine through. It is in the category of materials that turn objects into something else. It is alchemy. Porcelain starts elsewhere, takes you elsewhere. Who could not be obsessed?" There have been personal milestones as well. His father-in-law has died, his dog has died. He and his wife and their three children have moved to a bigger house in south London, the vitrine set up in the hall, the 264 netsuke unpacked.

He has made at least £500,000 from "The Hare with Amber Eyes". But more than money, the book has given him exposure. Lord Rothschild has commissioned an installation for his former family home, Waddesdon Manor, now part of the National Trust. Larry Gagosian, the world's leading art dealer, has taken on de Waal and promised him an exhibition in New York in 2013. And he was offered many, many times his £10,000 advance on "The Hare with Amber Eyes" for the new porcelain book. But first he had to return to Vienna.

THE DE WAAL family gathered en masse in October for the launch of the Austrian edition. Edmund came by train, fresh from his German book tour. His wife, Sue Chandler, and their two sons flew in from London. His father Victor, now 82, was there too. Jiro Sugiyama came from Tokyo and invited the family to stay at the Grand Hotel which, like the Palais Ephrussi, had once been a private house, home to a Jewish banker and his grand-daughter.

The Palais Ephrussi is now owned by a law firm which bought it in 2009 for a reported €65m. (Elisabeth de Waal got just $30,000 in compensation for it from the Austrian government after the war.) The law firm invited Edmund and the other Ephrussi descendants to tea. Victor, who hadn't been back to the house for nearly three-quarters of a century, showed his grandsons his old playroom and a hidden route to the roof. In the evening, the publisher's guests stepped over the initials "JE" (for Joachim Ephrussi, the founder of the family) set in the marble entrance and gathered around de Waal in the courtyard. In his familiar floppy dark suit and thin tie, he stood on the spot where Emmy's marquetry desk had come crashing down over the balcony, the first Ephrussi to address a gathering there since before the war.

"You cannot imagine how scary it is to do this," he began. "If I had understood quite what I'd been given when I was given these little Japanese things I would have run away. In my naivety, I thought I could take six months off from my studio, run to Paris, skip off to Vienna, write my book, give it to my father to read and that would be that.

"But I had made a very stupid and personal pact, which was to go to every single place and be in every single space that these things had been and try and understand the feeling of the people who held them. And that, of course, was madness.

"When I began this book, I had not thought through what it would take to tell the story of 1938. It is still history you can reach out and touch. It's history that unfolded hour by hour, day by day, in this house. The violence. The separation.

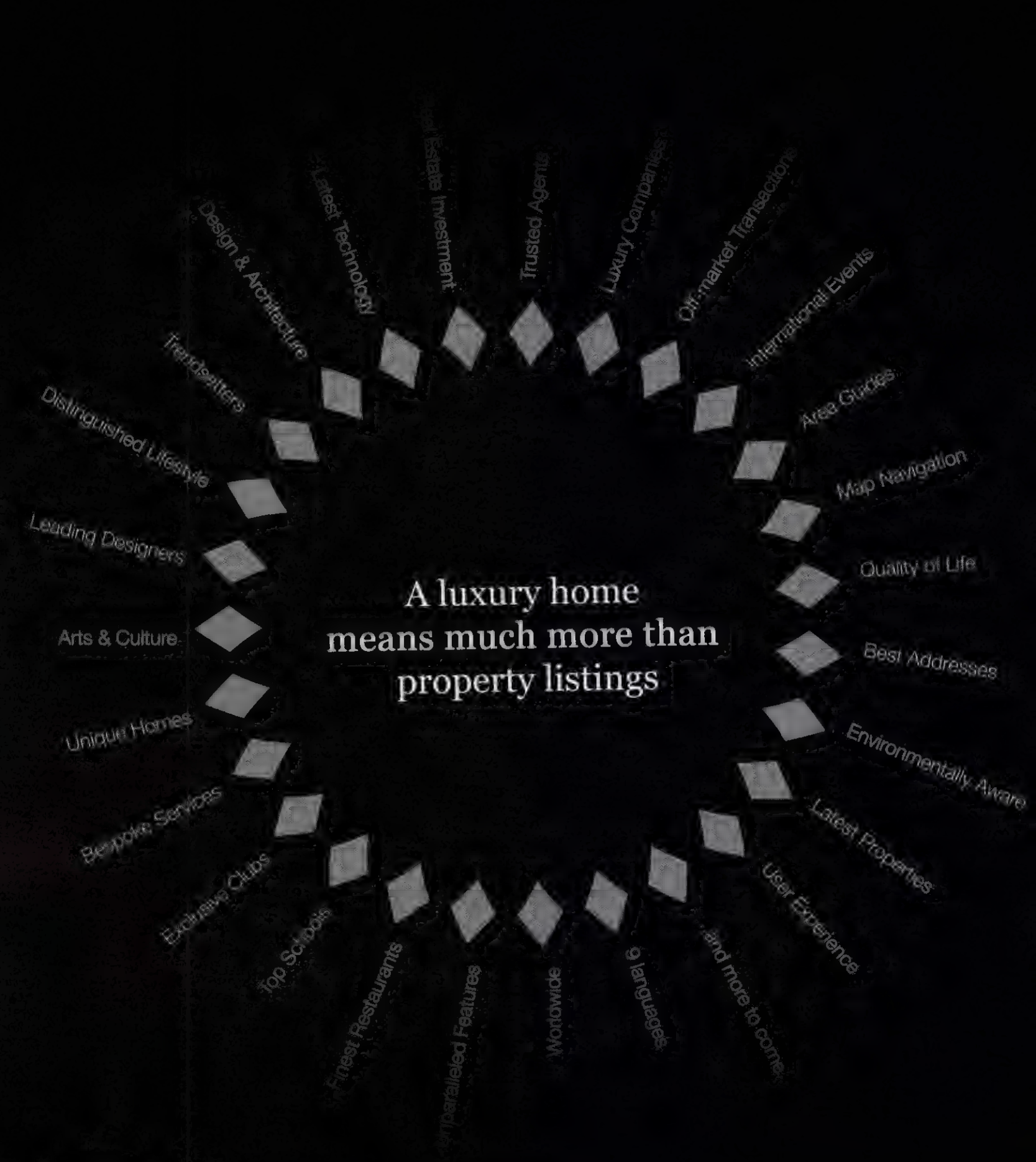
"When, after eight years, my grandmother returned, it was not to an empty house, but to an emptied house.

"I find that I am the same person and a different person. I make the same pots and I make different pots. I sit at my wheel and I think about the collections of porcelain that I make and I think about diaspora and stories and place. The process that has brought me here today has given back the story. Not the story about the dynasty, the banks, the gilding. That's not the point. The point is that it is a family story, and like all family stories it goes on and on. This family story was given to me when I was given these objects.

"Restitution is a very loaded word. It has so many cadences. It is giving what has been stolen and looted. Of my grandfather's library there is no trace. There are paintings hanging all over Vienna, all over Germany that were taken from this house. And that's a crime, a straightforward crime.

"Yet there is also another restitution; the restitution of the story. What Anna gave back to my grandmother was continuity, it was her story, and it was giving with incredible even-handedness. For me 'The Hare with Amber Eyes' has been the restitution to Vienna of this story, this family and this place."

As he reached out to beckon his father and his young sons to join him on the podium, de Waal knew this was another milestone. But not the end of the story. The fellow guests who heard him tell the tale for the first time at that Harvard conference six years earlier had urged him to pick an unforgettable title. The original choice was "Anna's Pocket". Until de Waal finds out who Anna was and what became of her, there will always be a bit of the untold story driving him on. ■



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The valley between Lalibela and Makina Lideta Maryan
"Before I got there", says Salgado, "I heard a lot of people who specialise in Ethiopia saying: 'You'll find a lot of starvation up there.' Most of the [illegible] Ethiopia [illegible] from these highlands.' That's a supposition. When I walked through it, I discovered a huge area of traditional agriculture and production, very well done, very well worked-out."

A big dignity

Up on the plateau in northern Ethiopia, life has barely changed in thousands of years. **Sebastião Salgado** spent two months walking in the mountains to catch the intricacies of the landscape

ABOVE
Between Abune Yosef and Yemrehanna Kristos
"People in this part of Ethiopia often live with their cattle in their houses. It can get very cold – one day during our walk it was -7°C. The heat from the cattle makes the houses quite comfortable"

RIGHT
The Simien national park
"The landscape is like the Grand Canyon, created by huge erosions over millions of years. Some of the valleys are 1,500 metres deep"

IN THE HIGHLANDS of northern Ethiopia, the mountains keep insiders in and outsiders out. There is only one main road, and no other access except on foot. For Sebastião Salgado, who took the photographs on these pages, this made it a perfect subject. "I wanted to photograph here because it is isolated," he says.

For seven years, Salgado has been working on a vast project called "Genesis", of which these pictures are a part. He has travelled around the world – to the Galapagos, the Congo, Antarctica – capturing places and lives untouched by modern development. The scale of the project is typical of him. Since the 1970s, when he took up photography after a brief career as an economist, he has specialised in long-term reportage in black and white. "Migrations", a photo essay capturing people on the move begun in 1993, took him six years to complete. It had 44 international exhibitions, including at the United Nations in New York and the Barbican in London. He has won umpteen awards, but has never focused so intensely on landscapes, as he does here. Born on a farm in Brazil in 1944, he feels "Genesis" is returning him to his own origins. "If I'd been smart", he says, "this would have been the first project I ever worked on in my life. But it was necessary for me to do all the others to realise I had to do this one."

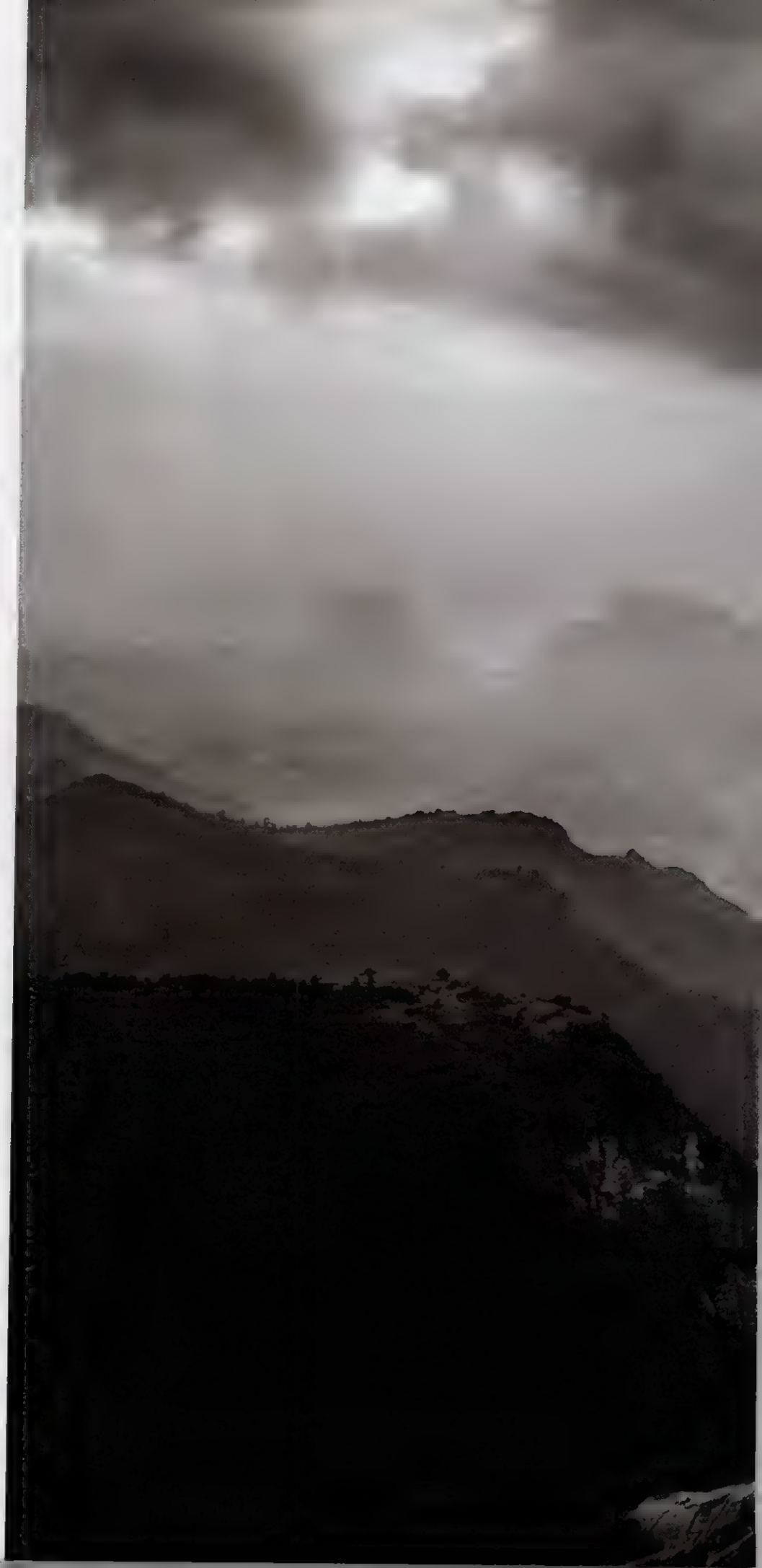
In October 2008, Salgado set out from Lalibela, a town known as a place of pilgrimage, on a 55-day walk. He was accompanied by a guide, a local assistant and a phalanx of 18 donkeys and their owners – "when you hire a donkey here, you hire its owner too." Also in the party were two armed guards, one carrying a Kalashnikov, the other a rifle from the second world war. From Lalibela they walked north-west towards the Simien mountains, covering more than 800 kilometres. It was exhausting – five of the donkeys died, "a big, big drama" – but exhilarating. "You have your destiny in your hand," Salgado says. "You can >

> go where you want. You don't have any restrictions." He was also moved by the hospitality he encountered. "We were received like you can't imagine. We would arrive in the villages, and they would invite me to sit down. They took off my shoes, washed my feet. Now this is a big sign of humility." After two weeks, he decided that the guards were more provocation than protection, and sent them home.

Walking was invaluable. "Photographing a landscape is no different to photographing a human," says Salgado. "You must respect the landscape, integrate with the landscape, with everything that gives volume to the landscape." The result is a powerful geological drama. In his shot of the Tekeze river (*overleaf*), slicing its way through a gorge 300 metres deep, the top of the bluff is set high in the composition, an implacable obstacle, flat as a ruler. On foot he found the vertiginous perspectives that give these pictures their grandeur. When he talks of "my greys, my middle-tones", his voice softens, as if they were children to be coaxed to their potential. "When I photograph a landscape", he says, "I need to have a sky, I need to have a special light." In these pictures the sun bursts like a benediction.

The title "Genesis" carries an obvious religious load, but Salgado distances himself vehemently from the association. "No, no, no, I am talking only about origins." But if there's anything in the first book of the Bible that he might hold to, it is that when it comes to the earth we are obliged "to dress it and to keep it". In a valley outside Lalibela, he captured fastidiously cultivated fields multiplying countlessly into the distance. The care that the people put into them impressed Salgado, who created a nature reserve himself in Brazil in 1998. "It is very intensive agriculture," he says, "but they have their way of resting the land."

At 67, he says that "Genesis" is likely to be his last large-scale work. But when he adds "I am discovering photography again, I am discovering new pleasure in my work," it's a little hard to believe him. - SIMON WILLIS



The Simien national park
"The landscape here has a big personality, a big dignity. If you give special attention to the landscape, it gives something back to you"

The Tekeze river
"The river is also called the Door of the Simiens. We were at the lowest point of our trip – 1,100 metres above sea-level – when I saw the mountains in the distance, and they were still 10 or 15 days' walk away"

A village at the end of the Telfetet Valley, near Abune Yosef
"When we arrived in a village, we would find a guy who knew at least two villages in front of us to be our guide. He would accompany us to those villages. Then he would go back and we would go on."

60 YEARS IN THE SAME JOB

When she reaches her diamond jubilee in February, Queen Elizabeth II will have been in her job for six decades. **Charles Nevin** tracks down six others in the same boat, ranging from a model to a cider farmer and a quantum physicist

DAPHNE SELFE is 83. She likes sugar in her tea, cake with it, biscuits, Downton Abbey and raising money for her local church. She has a son, two daughters and four grandchildren. Daphne doesn't like playing bridge, or sitting around. She also wears a black leather jacket without looking ridiculous, and has been working as a model for 63 years. In the past two years she has been on assignments in Paris, Prague, Berlin, Beijing, Ibiza, South Africa and more. She is, to be fair, a little bemused: "What's going on? Perhaps this is my swan song." It seems unlikely, although she does have "certain limitations", such as being unable to wear high heels now, unlike, as she acknowledges, the Queen.

"She's amazing," says Daphne. "She looks even better than when she was younger." Which might also be said of Daphne, who got her big break when she was working at a Reading department store in 1950 after her ambition to work with horses had suffered a setback, and "Mummy said 'you just can't sit around'." First it was a local magazine cover, and then she was off to London: "Mummy thought that was a lot better than horses...less dangerous, to some extent, or perhaps dangerous in a different way."

Daphne, you will gather, has a twinkle and an accent of a type – somewhere between Fenella Fielding and Joanna Lumley – heard less often now than then (her father was a schoolmaster who read Greek in bed for fun). London and modelling in the early Fifties, though, "wasn't anything special. There were no supermodels, it wasn't talked about much at all...I wasn't nearly as successful in my 20s, I didn't get anything really exciting." Daphne married Jim, a television stage >

PORTRAITS **NICK BALLON**

Hair, model's own
Daphne Selfe, 83.

> manager, produced three children, and returned to modelling in the Sixties. "But they didn't like me. I wasn't the right type: Twiggy and Jean Shrimpton had the blonde fringe, I was dark with wavy hair, much more classic, really. I didn't fit in at all. But I did do a lot of what they call store modelling, wearing somebody's clothes and walking round the restaurant."

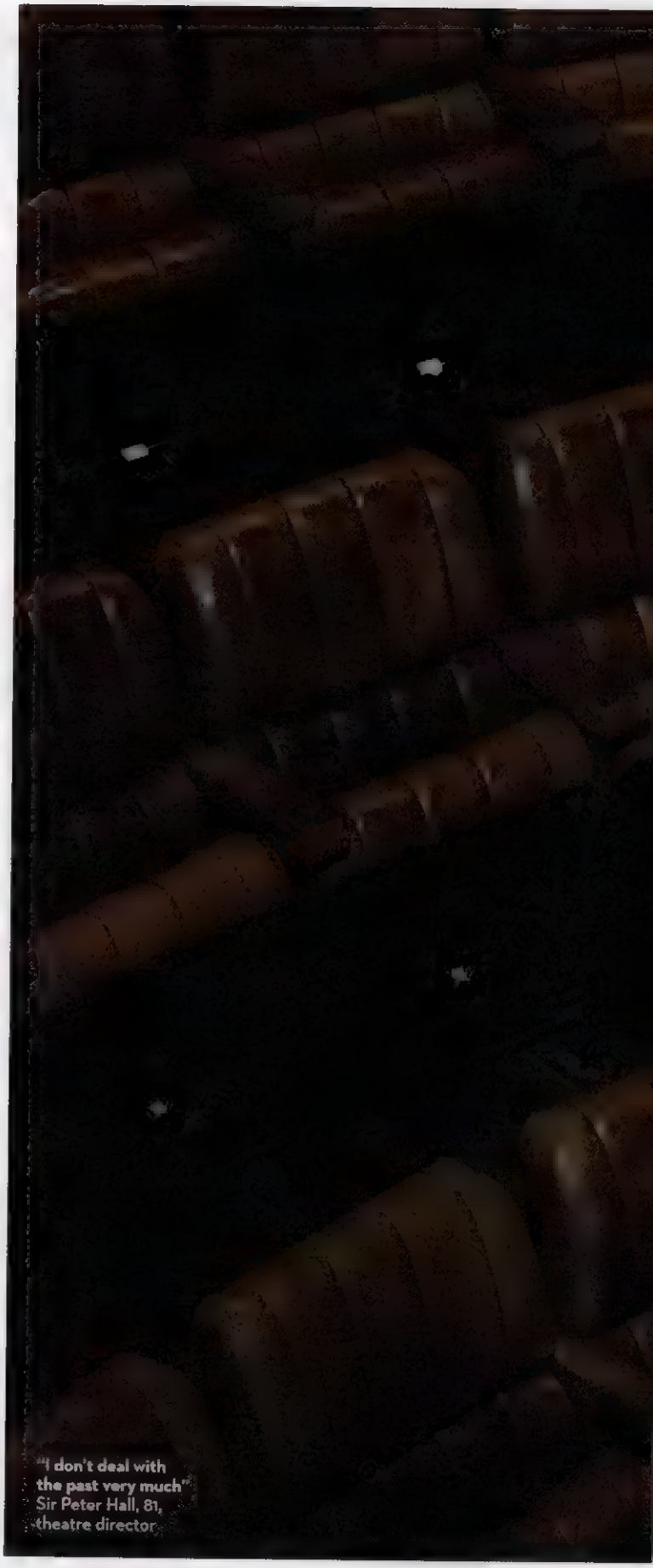
And so her career continued, supplemented by any number of appearances as a television and film extra, and arriving, in a stately way, in the early Nineties, at an advertisement for Stannah Stairlifts – "first floor, please, Stan!" Work became more difficult, as she was caring for Jim after he'd had a stroke. Then, in 1998, the year after Jim's death, came her great rediscovery, at the age of 70, when she was hired by Red or Dead for a London Fashion Week show. Suddenly, Daphne was in *Vogue*, "which I'd given up dreaming about years ago...I was very surprised, extraordinarily surprised...70 was very unusual for a model...I've been very lucky, the camera likes me."

She was 5ft 7½ and 10 stone ("a big strapping horsey girl!") when she started; she is 5ft 6 and 8 stone now. She exercises "most days". She has always had energy, doesn't get jetlag and loves doing new things, a trait she clearly shares with her son, who has been, *inter alia*, a banker and an explorer, and now teaches yoga in India. One of her daughters sculpts; the other has been a ferociously keen sky-diver. Daphne has modelled for Mario Testino, Mary McCartney and Rankin, who told her that the difference between her and younger models was that they had nothing behind their eyes because they had no experience. Or, as Daphne puts it, "The reason why I've lasted so long is because I'm not quite as thick as some...you have to bring an element of intelligence to any job, that's what sustains you and the people you work with."

And, "You've got to take rejection. I go to lots of auditions, and you only get one out of several, that's how it is. It's not necessarily your fault, it's what they're looking for, and if you don't fit the bill, it's nothing to do with how good or bad you are. That's quite difficult for young girls to get used to. But I'm old and sensible – or insensible now – so I don't worry about it, and on to the next one." With that, she was off home to watch Sir David Attenborough, 85.

SIR PETER HALL, at 81, with 60 years of directing theatre and opera behind him, with achievements that include founding the Royal Shakespeare Company, running the National Theatre, introducing the world to "Waiting for Godot", and conjuring fresh marvels from Shakespeare, has no time for dwelling on all that. "I don't deal with the past very much," he says. When I saw him, he was about to leave for Chicago and New York to discuss the future, new projects, exciting projects, but best to say no more, yet.

Surely, now, after all that, there cannot be many unfulfilled ambitions? Sir Peter, at home in his Chelsea kitchen, considers the question. "To do it well," he replies. He follows >



"I don't deal with the past very much" Sir Peter Hall, 81, theatre director

WITH THANKS TO THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE, LONDON

> this with a pause and then one of his characteristically sudden smiles; but he has already conveyed with economy, in two phrases, how to keep on. It means, too, that it is useless to ask him about the greatest moment of his career, or whether it's a matter of regret that many of his masterpieces are unrecorded: "I shan't be here to worry about it."

If pushed, he says, he can stop working for a month, if he has to, but it's boring. Relaxation is watching plays and films and going to concerts, what you might call director's holidays. If pushed, and clearly just to be polite, and worried about sounding "ridiculously pretentious", he will remember Beckett for you – "a delightful man, one of the funniest men I've ever met. He could tell a joke like you wouldn't believe." But unhappy with fame: "he was shy and embarrassed and almost wanted to hide". He will remember the era of Olivier, Gielgud and Peggy Ashcroft as a golden age, but one which has continued: the theatre is healthier than ever, in his view.

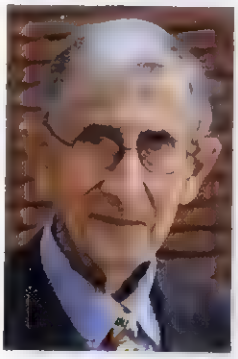
The contribution to this by Hall, the son of an East Anglian station master, may be unrivalled, particularly if you also consider the careers of his children in the arts: he has six by four wives. Christopher, his son by the actress Leslie Caron, is a television drama producer; Jennifer, Christopher's sister, is an actress, singer-songwriter and painter; Edward, Hall's son by Jacqueline Taylor, is a director like his father and runs the Hampstead Theatre; Lucy, Edward's sister, is a theatre designer; and Rebecca, Hall's daughter by the opera singer Maria Ewing, is a Hollywood actress and Shakespearean.

Would he have had anything different, another career, banking or business, perhaps? Well, he says, he ran the National Theatre for 15 years, that was a business. "I had to start at 5.30 in the morning if I was going to be a director of plays. I had to have done all the admin by 10.30. Then I could rehearse the play through lunch until about 2.30. There's no point doing the job if you can't do any plays." The play's the thing.

Shakespeare is the theatre's Everest, and Hall continues his exploratory mission: this year, with the Peter Hall Company, he directed the early history plays, revisiting his triumphant productions of the 1960s and, at 80, finding new shades and melancholies in Falstaff and his friends and rulers. But he is not keen on comparison, or analysis: "I always think it's rather a pity that people want to know what directors do, because it's like asking the cook to expose everything he's doing."

But if we wanted to talk about age, he remembered Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies coming to the National at the age of 100 (in 1991) to tell the company that the first thing with the Bard was to trust the words. They were gripped. Hall says his career, from outset to now, has been eased by the elaborate camaraderie of actors: "It's so sentimental the theatre...so romantic...and really it's tough as old boots." Would he resist the application of that description to himself? Another sudden smile: "No." And now he must continue his preparations for America. At the top of the stairs from the kitchen, he points out a poster bearing a quote from Beckett, the one about trying again and failing better. A very uncomplacent knight.

"TO BE HEALTHY MEANS TO LOVE AND TO WORK. BOTH ACTIVITIES ARE GOOD FOR THE SOUL, AND ONE OF THEM PAYS FOR THE GROCERIES"



FREEMAN DYSON, 88, is a pioneer quantum physicist, pure mathematician, metaphysicist, beady examiner of such givens as global warming and tireless explorer of our future as bio-engineering space colonisers. A Fellow of the Royal Society for 60 years, he left Britain at the age of 23 because he believed "Americans held the future in their hands and that the smart thing for me to do would be to join them." When he took up his post at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, Einstein was still working there. Startling propositions and inconvenient arguments are the signature of this human neutrino, widely regarded as one of the Nobel Committee's glaring omissions.

His father, Sir George Dyson, was a composer and director of the Royal College of Music. Freeman has six children, including George, a historian of science, who is about to publish a history of the digital age, and Esther, an internet analyst and entrepreneur dubbed "the first lady of cyberspace".

I e-mailed to ask him: (1) why he remained hard at work; (2) what were his strengths and weaknesses now compared with earlier in his career; and (3) what advice would he give to those who have been working for (a) one year, and (b) 30 years? This was his reply, received the next day:

> Thank you very much for your friendly invitation. I am delighted to share with Her Majesty the distinction of hanging on longer than expected. Here are brief answers to your questions.
>
> 1. I continue working because I agree with Sigmund Freud's definition of mental health. To be healthy means to love and to work. Both activities are good for the soul, and one of them also helps to pay for the groceries.
>
> 2. In my younger days my work as a scientist was deep and narrow. Now, as I grow old, my work grows broader and shallower. As a young man, I solved technical problems of interest only to a few specialists. As an old man, I write books about human affairs of interest to a broad public. In both halves of my life, I tried to make the best use of my limited abilities.

3. (a). Advice to people at the beginning of their careers: do not imagine that you have to know everything before you can do anything. My own best work was done when I was most ignorant. Grab every opportunity to take responsibility and do things for which you are unqualified.

(b). Advice to people at the middle of their careers: do not be afraid to switch careers and try something new. As my friend the physicist Leo Szilard said (number nine in his list of ten commandments): "Do your work for six years; but in the seventh, go into solitude or among strangers, so that the memory of your friends does not hinder you from being what you have become."

Now I look forward to reading what other survivors have to say. Thank you again for including me.

Yours sincerely

Freeman Dyson

JENS RISOM, 95, is a furniture designer. Perhaps his most celebrated piece is the 654w lounge chair he designed for Knoll, the German-American furniture-makers. Risom was born in Copenhagen but left for America in 1939, working for Knoll before joining the US Army, designing camouflage for Sherman tanks and translating for General Patton in Germany. After the war, he founded his own company, moving away from the Bauhaus-inspired steel of Knoll to new ways with wood. Based in Connecticut, he has lived long enough to be rediscovered: his classic pieces are back in production, and he is designing for the fashionable American retailer Design Within Reach. "I *think* furniture," he has said. This is his response to my e-mail asking the same questions I had put to Freeman Dyson – why he continued to work, what were his strengths and weaknesses compared with earlier in his career, and his advice.

1. I am still working because I enjoy continuing to create and because I still get as much of a thrill as ever in seeing my creations brought to life all over the world, especially as I still maintain control over manufacturers and distributors!

2. At 95, my main strength is my experience; after all, I have now been designing furniture for 70 years, so I have learnt a little... my main weakness is my eyesight, which, sadly, is not what it was. But I can still do enough on my drawing pad to give it to a designer to work out the details.

3. My advice to people who have been working one year: keep searching for the organisation that is best for you and has the best chance of bringing your ideas to life. After 30 years: never forget that you can still change, never be afraid to persevere.

On the Thursday, BRIAN GLANVILLE *(overleaf)* had fallen with a crash in the foyer of Holland Park underground station, hurting his back and damaging his hand. But it was only his left hand, so he continued with his plans for a visit to Norwich on the Saturday, where he watched the home football team draw 3-3 with Blackburn Rovers, then composed his usual plainly erudite report before completing the 200-mile round trip back to London. Glanville is 80.

And, it has to be said, not particularly impressed with such feats. "My wife was very cross with me for going to Norwich, but I thought I would go because I felt I could, and it worked." Football reporting, too, is not allowed to get above itself: "It's not an art form and if you try too hard the result is bathos." Nor does he regard it as a very hard job, even if he is perhaps the last sports journalist filing his match report the traditional way, sans laptop, dictating straight down the telephone from notes. (Newspaper copytakers are now a thing of the past: splendidly, Glanville employs the services of his son and grandson, who file his piece by computer for him.)

Still, it has also to be said, Glanville has been doing this a long time: he started freelancing about football while he was still a public-schoolboy at Charterhouse, and published his first book, a ghosted autobiography of the Arsenal great, Cliff Bastin, when he was 20. He has also written more than 20 novels, five collections of short stories, nearly 30 football books and not as many plays as he would have liked. Mellowing, it seems, is not advised should you wish to number among the octogenarian-employed. Glanville, despite all his success, remembers his mistakes in his football reports (two goals misattributed, thick fog, Brighton, 1950s) more than his triumphs. And the missed chances and bad luck for his plays and playwriting still irk. He quotes an Italian saying on luck he is fond of: "Se faceva capelli, nascono senza teste" ("If he was making hats, people would be born without heads").

He lived much in Italy in his earlier years, in Florence and Rome. He walked into the offices of *Corriere dello Sport* in Rome as a 17-year-old on holiday and was given work on the strength of an already substantial cuttings file, despite having no Italian, a gap subsequently remedied by residence and "Teach Yourself Italian". He covered the 1960 Olympics in Rome for the *Sunday Times* and has reported on 13 football World Cups. He has seen England follow and surpass the highly monied example of Italian football and thinks the "People's Game has been taken away from the people...the money has absolutely ruined football, I think...As soon as they formed the Premier League I called it 'The Greed is Good League', and I've never felt wrong to do so."

After the Rome Olympics, Glanville became a sports columnist, the *Sunday Times*'s first. He began by backing the fight by English footballers against the maximum wage, which was then £20 a week. "Now players make more in a week than I can ever hope to make in a year...I don't think it's entirely my fault, but I take some of the blame," he says, demonstrat- >

Four score
Brian Glanville, 80,
football writer

> ing that not always taking yourself entirely seriously is also important for longevity. It's an attitude helped by being first introduced to the game at Bognor Regis Town by a romanticist of an Irish Jewish dentist father whose clients included Max Wall, Bud Flanagan and other music-hall turns. Brian's children are talented disparates: Mark is a professional singer; Toby is a photographer; Liz, Toby's twin, teaches at university in Rome; and Jo edits the campaigning magazine *Index on Censorship*. The only cliché to which they conform is that Liz and Jo follow their mother, Pam, a former magazine editor, in having little interest in sport.

Glanville has two pieces of advice for those hoping to embark on a 60-year writing career: first, to persist, "and if you're any good, you'll get there"; and second, to avoid the mistake of exaggerating the influence and importance of journalists and journalism, while continuing to challenge the influence and importance of others. You had, he said, just got to go on: he played for the Chelsea Casuals, the magnificently eclectic and artful parks team he helped found, until he was 69, and still remembers being kicked by the comedian Ronnie Corbett. And now he is ready to take his laptop to matches, and make his family redundant.

CORBIS

We cannot, by convention, ask **THE QUEEN** directly for her thoughts on 60 years of hard reigning, but she is unlikely to be either impressed or dismayed to find herself still working at the age of 85. A great deal of official and unofficial fawning surrounds the British monarch, but it seems clear that her leading characteristic, a result of both temperament and upbringing, is a formidable sense of duty.

After 60 years, the figures are arresting. She has made over 300 state visits abroad, some 25,000 visits around Britain to greet, meet, open and tour, hosted more than 100 state banquets for foreign heads of state, including Robert Mugabe and Nicolae Ceausescu, conferred 400,000 honours, dealt with around 150 prime ministers in Britain and the Commonwealth, received 3.5m pieces of correspondence and attended to daily red boxes containing various matters of state, cabinet minutes, appointments, legislation. According to a new biography, "Our Queen" by Robert Hardman, she has fallen asleep at work once, very briefly, in 2004, during a lecture on new insights into biology and medicine with the use of magnets at the Heinrich Heine University, Dusseldorf.

She is the third British monarch to reach the age of 80, and the first to remain active: George III was pronounced mad, and Queen Victoria withdrew. Elizabeth II's daily schedule remains little changed from 20 years ago, and in some respects has increased: as the royal family has become more open, entertaining has risen by 50% in the last five years. After a famously frugal and inflexible breakfast involving cereal in Tupperware, BBC Radio 4, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Racing Post* and a bagpiper beneath the window, she takes to her desk to read the rest of the British newspapers and deal with correspondence and the first of the red boxes. She then telephones her senior private secretary and asks if he is free to come up, a command masquerading as a question which exemplifies the style of a monarch bound by the unwritten subtleties of the British constitution.

Various meetings and engagements will follow, including audiences with British and foreign diplomats, and senior clergy from the Church of England, of which she is the supreme and interested governor. Often, too, there is an investiture, where she will stand for an hour bestowing official honours, formally and individually. In the afternoon and evening there will be public engagements: as Andrew Marr puts it in his new biography, "The Diamond Queen", it has been "a life of turning up". And as the Buckingham Palace website puts it, "Often, one of the last lights on in the Palace at night is the Queen finishing her 'red box' of official papers."

We are even less likely to learn what she thinks of this endless reading, and page-ticking, of government papers proposing, reporting and ordering matters on her behalf over which she has no power: duty, again. Hers not to question why, except in private, with the prime minister, unminuted, at his weekly audience. She will keep on, aided by her personal constitution: "She sleeps well, she's got very good legs, and she can stand for a long time," Lord Charteris, a former private secretary once said. "The Queen is as strong as a yak."

In sharp contrast to the Queen, with her 300 trips overseas, **FRANK NAISH** has never left the country. In the past 60 years, Frank has not spent a night out of Somerset. Ask if he has ever been on holiday, and Frank, standing in his farmyard, below the home cider orchard, with Glastonbury Tor in finest moody mode to the west, considers for a moment before replying, "Yes, when I was in the army." That was 1943.

Frank is 87 now. Mementoes of his working life are spread about the farm, including a gallery of tractors: Frank's father got their first one, a Fordson Standard, in 1945. Before that it was horses, but you will get no sentiment about them from Frank: "tractors don't get tired, do 'em?"

On one side of the farmyard is the store where the apple juice lies fermenting: Frank goes right up to the limit of 7,000 litres of cider a year that small makers are allowed free >

ACCORDING TO A NEW BIOGRAPHY, THE QUEEN HAS FALLEN ASLEEP AT WORK ONCE, VERY BRIEFLY, IN 2004

"If you give up,
you've had it"
Frank Naish, 87
cider farmer
PETTER

THE ARMY? "THAT WERE A SOFT JOB" – EVEN IF HE ALMOST GOT BLOWN UP

> of duty. Next door is the 19th-century ratchet double-screw press which he finally gave up using three years ago.

It was a year before that that Frank stopped hand-picking apples from the ground and switched to a machine. Back-breaking work, half a tonne of apples in a day, no gloves – "gloves is no good for picking!" – often on icy November days as well as russet-hued autumn ones. Frank used to get up at 4am every day to hand-milk the farm's dairy herd: "The milk lorry used to come at eight, but if we weren't quite ready I'd go up the side to have half a glass of cider." Frank gets up at six now, and likes a glass with his supper. But he can remember when everybody drank a lot more, like the day he and his brother, Harold, and a friend were haymaking, and got through five gallons.

That was a day; and there was the shove-halfpenny at the Tor Fair, and the time the German bomber came down the road from Glastonbury, firing, and he and Harold had to dive behind the apple trees, and the bomb bound for Bristol docks that dropped nearby and blew the lock off the door that's only just been fixed. The army – "that were a soft job!" – even if he almost got blown up in Colchester, too. But it only lasted a few months before he got sent back to work the farm.

There was a girl, but Frank never married; nor did his brother. They worked together until Harold's death five years ago: there is an unshakable sense of the old country ways, that Frank's life could not have been any other. Now he has a younger partner, Paul Chant, also devoted to those ways. But not stuck in them: they have just introduced a new production line, involving an American press, an apple conveyor belt and a bath, to stop Frank bending too much.

At the last Bath & West country show, Frank was given a lifetime award for services to the cider industry, but he's not stopping, because "if you give up, you've had it". And there will have to be cider on the other side, because "twon't be no good going otherwise". He was presented with his award by Michael Eavis, his neighbour, of Worthy Farm and the Glastonbury Festival, who uses some of Frank's land for grazing. Frank is treated as a VIP at the festival, enjoys the atmosphere if not the music, and last year met, among others, Maxi Jazz, the rapper, who was impressed.

Frank remembers the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at the Bath & West many years ago. Frank is an old Labour man, but he thinks the Queen is "a damn good queen... we've got to have a queen or king, otherwise we'll have a dictator, won't we?" But he's not so sure of any comparison between his and his monarch's working practices: "I wouldn't know about that...I expect she's got servants, hasn't she?" ■

CULTURE

Silent symphonies

In the woods not far from Helsinki stands a wooden villa where Jean Sibelius lived, died, wrote much of his music – and spent decades not writing, or not publishing. **Julian Barnes** explores the house and its mysteries

THERE ARE TWO famous silences in the history of classical music: those of Rossini and Sibelius. Rossini's, which lasted nearly 40 years, was a worldly, cosmopolitan silence, much of it spent in Paris, during which time he co-invented tournedos Rossini. Sibelius's, which lasted nearly 30 years, was more austere, self-punishing and site-specific; and whereas Rossini finally yielded again to music, writing the late works he referred to as "the sins of my old age", Sibelius was implacable. He fell silent, and remained silent.

I first got to know his music almost half a century ago in recordings by Anthony Collins and the London Symphony Orchestra. The sleeves of those old Ace of Clubs LPs featured black-and-white photos of appropriately Nordic scenes: snowscapes, fjords, towering pine trees, and so on. I think these images were mixed up with my early appreciation: there was a cool yet turbulent melancholy to them which I also found in the music, and which seemed to harmonise with my unrestful late-adolescent soul. But the music has stayed with me all my life, and, though generally uninterested in the lives of composers, I make an exception for Sibelius. I admire his mixture of puckish humour and obdurate high principle. During a conducting tour of England, he said in one post-concert speech, "I have plenty of friends here, and, naturally, I hope, >

PHOTOGRAPHS **EMMA HARDY**

> enemies." He consoled a young colleague for a bad review with the words: "Always remember, there is no city in the world which has erected a statue to a critic." And during his final, silent years – he lived to the age of 91 – he noted at one point in his diary: "Cheer up! Death is round the corner." So for years I have wanted to visit Sibelius's house, 40 kilometres north of Helsinki, a region of lakes and pine forests and towering silver birches. For me it has always been a place with a dual, divided reputation: for both creation and destruction, for both music and silence.

MOST ARTISTS' HOUSES have had previous and subsequent owners. In some you feel only a vestige of the artist's presence; others have had their spirit crushed by museumification, by curatorial intervention and the accretion of study centres. The Sibelius house is one of those rare places where no other presence interferes with the *genius loci*: it is a house of, for, by, with and about Sibelius. He bought a one-acre plot at Järvenpää near Lake Tuusula in 1903. There was already an artists' colony here, but Sibelius was as much attracted by the empty landscape in which he loved to walk, by the swans and geese passing overhead.

In September 1904 he moved his family into the still unfinished house which he named Ainola (the suffix "-la" meaning "place of") after his wife Aino. Here they brought up their five daughters (a sixth died in infancy). Here Sibelius composed most of his major works, from the violin concerto of 1905 to the last five of his seven symphonies, and here he spent three decades not publishing a single note. When, in 1957, death's long round-the-corner wait ended, he was buried in the grounds; Aino lived on here for another 12 years; their joint tomb, a six-foot square low bronze slab – which has the monumental inevitability of the later symphonies – was designed by their architect son-in-law Aulis Blomstedt. The five daughters, old themselves by the time of Aino's death at the age of 97, sold the house and contents to the Finnish state in 1972, and it opened as a museum in 1974.

The house was designed (for no charge) by an architect friend, Lars Sonck, in the "National Romantic" style. It is essentially a grand log villa built on a heavy stone base and clad with weatherboard; in the grounds Aino designed a sauna house (with laundry room), laid out vegetable and flower gardens, and planted fruit trees, some of which still survive. Inside, the main rooms have heavy pine beams and those typically Scandinavian high stoves finished in glazed brick or tile. There is the feel of solid, continuous living to the place. Even the Sibeliuses' two housemaids were solid and continuous: both lasted nearly 60 years.

Here is the Steinway he was given on his 50th birthday – though he composed in his head, not at the piano

Almost nothing has changed (though Sibelius's original manuscripts have been removed to the national archives); and the place which once held Sibelius and his music still holds them both. The composer's white summer suit rests on a hanger in his study; his broad-brimmed Borsalino and stick are on a nearby table. Here is the Steinway grand he was given on his 50th birthday (though he composed in his head, not at the piano); there is a run of the *National Geographic* magazine covering the last five years of his life. On the Russian oak desk at which he worked from the time of his marriage in 1892 lies the wooden ruler Aino carved for him, with which he ruled his scores; also, an empty box of Corona cigars, and an elegant Tiffany photo frame, containing a portrait of Aino, through which the light streams. Open on the desk is a facsimile score of his greatest symphony, the Fourth. But the homely is never far away: in the kitchen, screwed to the wall, is an apple-coring machine which Sibelius brought back from one of his trips to America. Made of black cast iron, it is a Heath Robinson contraption of prongs, screws and blades which will peel, core and slice your apple at the turn of a handle. From the same trip he

"A place with a dual reputation"
LEFT Julian Barnes takes a close look at the stove that played a key part in the story
ABOVE Sibelius's summer suit

also brought his wife a Tiffany diamond; but it is the apple corer that sticks in the mind.

Reminders of his fame are everywhere, from an enormous laurel wreath (now much dried) which once encircled him on a notable birthday, to the multiple commemorative images made of him. Every time a plaster medallion of Finland's greatest artist was cast, he was given a personal copy, and most seem to have ended up on his walls. But genius had to coexist with family life, and it was not always easy. "Our souls are worn down through continuous contact with one another," Sibelius wrote in his diary. And: "I am building a studio for myself – at least one. Next to me are all the children whose babbling and pranks ruin everything." But he never did build himself a studio; instead, he relocated his study upstairs and forbade the noise of any instrument while he was in the house. The children had to wait until he had gone for his daily walk to do their music practice.

THE HOUSE, THOUGH comfortable and practical, is by no means extravagant. The visitor might reasonably conclude this was just a summer home, used by Sibelius to get away from the city. Not a bit of it. For most of his life he was in serious debt. At first these were a young man's debts, caused by his taste for high living: he was a committed drinker who would often go missing for days (but could always be located in "the best restaurant serving oysters and champagne"). And though the drinking was lifelong, and his tastes remained luxurious – that white suit came from Paris, his shoes and shirts were made for him in Berlin – this was not the reason why Aino kept chickens, laid out a vegetable garden, planted fruit trees and schooled her own children. Sibelius took on a huge debt when he built Ainola, and wasn't able to clear it for more than two decades. The website sibelius.fi contains a terrifying graph of his indebtedness for the period 1892-1926: it peaks at the equivalent of €300,000 today.

But, you will say, he was a world-famous composer. His music was constantly played; he was feted everywhere, not least in Britain – "the land without chauvinism", as he called it (we are to presume he was only talking musically). Constant Lambert, in his 1934 study "Music Ho!", extravagantly called him "the most important writer [of symphonies] since Beethoven". Yale gave him a doctorate in 1914. How could such a man not afford to pay off the debts on his house? How come he was only saved from bankruptcy in 1910 by the intervention of generous patrons?

The answer lies mainly in history and the curious laws of copyright. When Sibelius started composing, Finland was part of the Russian empire, and Russia was not a signatory to international copyright trea- >

>ties. So – apart from performing fees (and he often conducted) – Sibelius's income came from selling his work outright to music publishers. In 1905, for instance, he signed an agreement with Robert Lienau in Berlin to supply "four major works" in the coming year, the first of which went to pay for the sauna house Aino designed. Finland gained independence from Russia in 1919, but didn't sign the Berne Convention on Copyright until 1928 – by which time Sibelius had entered into his silence.

And in any case, you couldn't retrospectively claim copyright on what you had previously sold outright. To take the most egregious example: Sibelius composed his famous "Valse Triste" as part of the incidental music to "Kuolema" (1903). The following year he made two arrangements of the piece, each of which he sold outright for 100 marks (a little less than €3,000 in modern money). This may have seemed canny at the time. But "Valse Triste" was to become the best-known piece of music Sibelius ever composed; in the 1930s it was estimated to be the world's second most-played tune after "White Christmas" – yet from all the recordings and playings and sheet music Sibelius didn't receive a cent. He survived with the help of donations, national collections and a government pension; in 1912, he even thought of emigrating, whereupon the government raised his stipend and there were relieved newspaper headlines reading "JEAN SIBELIUS REMAINS IN FINLAND". He finally became solvent at the age of 62, in 1927, and was eventually to die a fairly rich man. But it is an instructive story at a time when copyright is once again an issue, music piracy rife, and "Don't-be-evil" Google has illegally digitalised hundreds of thousands of books still in copyright.

There is something heroic about those writers and artists who choose silence when it would be

A composition

ABOVE The Russian oak desk Sibelius used from 1892 to 1957. He ruled his scores with the ruler, carved for him by his wife

BELOW Commemorative images of him are all over the house

easier to supply profitable titbits to an adoring audience. Sibelius struggled with his Eighth Symphony for many years. He was constantly badgered about its progress; conductors and concert impresarios begged a foretaste. He always refused. Some believe that in the decades he worked on it he had finished only one movement. Sibelius himself claimed that he had "completed" the Eighth "many times" – though perhaps only in his head. In any event, at some point in the early 1940s, he piled the manuscript sketches of the Eighth plus a large quantity of other unfinished or (in his view) inadequate works into a big laundry basket, took them to the dining room, and, with Aino's help, began to feed them into the stove. After a while, Aino no longer had the strength to watch, and left the room, so she was unable to confirm exactly what had gone into the flames. But she reported that afterwards, "My husband became calmer and his attitude was more optimistic. It was a happy time."

The stove, made at the local brickworks, is chunky and rustic, with a glistening green finish (Sibelius saw colours as keys: green was F major, yellow D major). I bent down and tried to open the small steel doors, to see exactly where all that potential music had turned to ash. But they were screwed shut – not, it transpired, out of any piety, rather because in the years of Aino's widowhood the stove had been converted to electricity. Electricity also powered the library's shiny walnut-cased radiogram which the

head of Philips gave Sibelius in the early 1950s. This was the last of a series of such instruments on which, all through the three decades of his personal silence, music had come into Ainola from Berlin, London, Paris and New York. Or from just 40 kilometres away. At the exact time Sibelius lay dying, on September 20th 1957, the Helsinki City Orchestra was playing his Fifth Symphony under Sir Malcolm Sargent. Naturally, the concert was being broadcast on Finnish radio, and Aino later recalled that she had been tempted to turn on the radiogram, in the hope that her husband's music might bring him back to consciousness; but in the end, she decided not to.

In his last year, Sibelius wrote in his diary:

> The swans are always on my mind, and they lend magnificence to life. It is strange to note that nothing in the whole world, not in art, literature or music, has such an effect on me as these swans and cranes and bean geese. Their calls and their appearance.

If you stand in the grounds of Ainola today you are more likely to hear the steady thrum of traffic from a nearby road than the honk and wail of any passing wildlife. But the place retains its magic as a meeting-point of high art and practical living, of musical fame and apple-peeling machines, of conjured sounds and final silence. ■

Ainola is open May 2nd to September 30th 2012, 10am-5pm, closed Mondays and June 22nd. ainola.fi

Hot hits, 1972

A gem of a year for music is about to reach its ruby anniversary. **Tim de Lisle** digs out some old LPs

It was the best of years, it was the worst of years. Seen from one angle, the music of 1972 summed up all the faults of the era: shouty pop songs with silly spelling ("Mama Weer All Crazee Now" by Slade), sacrilegious cover versions of great spirituals ("Amazing Grace" by the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards), tedious novelty records ("My Ding-a-Ling" by Chuck Berry), soggy ballads from teen idols ("How Can I Be Sure" by David Cassidy). And all these went *to number one*. But if you put them aside, 1972 was solid gold.

DAVID BOWIE FIVE YEARS
(all songs at iTunes)
Few rock stars have ever had a year like Bowie in 1972. He released four classic singles – "Changes", "Starman" and "The Jean Genie", plus "All the Young Dudes", which he handed to Mott the Hoople – and one classic album, "Ziggy Stardust", featuring this superbly theatrical ballad.

ROXY MUSIC IF THERE IS SOMETHING
After unleashing the pop-art pop of "Virginia Plain", Roxy supported Bowie at the Rainbow, Finsbury Park. Years later, Bowie covered this track from their first album: a gorgeously tortured country song, written by Bryan Ferry, which also looms large in the Daniel Craig film "Flashbacks of a Fool".

T REX TELEGRAM SAM
Bowie's mate Marc Bolan was on fire too in 1972, persuading a whole generation to spend 45p on songs that were little more than snappy R'n'B tracks sprinkled with glitter. This one still has a kick. To avoid British taxes, it was recorded in France, just like...

THE ROLLING STONES HAPPY
"Exile on Main Street" has weathered astonishingly well given the amount of heroin that went into its creation. A British number one in 2010, it is the Stones LP that ranks highest in lists of great albums. "Happy", written and sung, or muttered, by Keith Richards, is a delicious shambles.

JOHN LENNON & YOKO ONO WOMAN IS THE NIGGER OF THE WORLD
Say what you like about "Imagine", Lennon had a rare gift for seeing issues coming and turning them into mantras. He was half visionary, half copywriter. Banned by the BBC in 1972, this song still has asterisks on iTunes today.

STEVIE WONDER SUPERSTITION
First he survived child stardom with less damage than anyone else in pop. Then he reeled off a series of sublime records in his early 20s. This hit, from "Talking Book", has the funkiest riff ever played on the clavinet.

AL GREEN LET'S STAY TOGETHER
There are fast songs, there are slow songs, and there is Al Green. Nobody ever made a medium tempo so slyly seductive. A decade later, this tune kickstarted Tina Turner's comeback.

ROBERTA FLACK THE FIRST TIME EVER I SAW YOUR FACE
Ewen MacColl's ode to his long-distance lover Peggy Seeger has been sung by a thousand singers, but seldom so slowly or surely as this. Its success was slow too. Recorded in 1969, it didn't catch on till Clint Eastwood used it for a love scene in "Play Misty for Me" (1971). Finally released as a single in '72, it topped the US chart and ended up as song of the year at the Grammys in '73.

PAUL SIMON MOTHER AND CHILD REUNION
Simon at his soulful best. This strange and mournful day changed the course of pop, as he left New York for Kingston, Jamaica, and discovered how much fun he could have with the rhythms and grooves of sunnier climes.

Ian Jack *At the Cinema*

Ralph Fiennes's "Coriolanus" almost convinces you of the importance of being relevant

A FREQUENT AMBITION of cinema, theatre and opera directors is to make centuries-old material "relevant" to a modern audience by moving it to a different age. The results can be confusing: recently, for example, I sat through an opera originally set in 17th-century Scotland in which some elements of the period had been retained (kilts, swords, feuds) but were now played out in a Victorian villa steam-heated by big fat radiators. Why? The only explanation must be directorial whim. Equally I was never sure why Richard Loncraine's film version of "Richard III" (1995) exchanged the 15th century for the 1930s, but at least the effect was charming and showed off lots of spectacular architecture that was then rather neglected, including Battersea Power Station and London University's Senate House, while Ian McKellen's malevolent king played with his model trains on the empty floors of the St Pancras station hotel.

With "Coriolanus", Ralph Fiennes makes a much more cogent case for this kind of transposition. In his first film as a director, Fiennes swaps Republican Rome (or Shakespeare's idea of it) for a troubled country in the present or near future. The real location is Belgrade, though no nation is specified in the film, which comes no closer in its specifics than "a city known as Rome" – as if it could just as easily be called something else, a city for Everyman. The landscape looks familiar though. It has slums mired in rubbish, angry crowds and vicious armies knocking lumps off its buildings and each other with automatic weapons – a country, in other words, that could be Afghanistan or Libya or perhaps our own some day, once global warming has parched southern Europe and sent populations north to grab stocks of water, wheat and potatoes. The outcome depends on warriors – the fighting classes – and civilians have turned the best of them into heroes. Coriolanus (Fiennes) and his implacable enemy Tullus Aufidius (Gerard Butler) belong to Plutarch's stories of ancient Rome, but in 2011 you could find their wannabe successors on the tailgates of pick-up trucks, letting off a few rounds at the Libyan sky.

The modern setting preserves both the plot and spirit of the play, while making for some awkward moments in the detail. To have Channel 4's Jon Snow appear as a TV newsreader wasn't a happy idea – at my screening the audience laughed – and when Shakespearean verse is set against machinegun fire, it sounds like a quill pen competing with a keyboard. In general, however, this is a persuasive reimagining of the play. More brilliant films have been inspired by Shakespeare, including two by the great Akira Kurosawa that were based very loosely on "Macbeth" and "King Lear", but I can't think of any that have remained so faithful to the text while so radically refreshing its surroundings. This isn't entirely a surprise. As a tragedy, "Coriolanus" has unusual amounts of action, much of it brutal, and very little reflection by way of soliloquy. The conflicts never stop: the plebeian crowd detest their patrician rulers and the generals distrust the politicians, while Coriolanus himself has no sooner defeated the Volscians at the front than he is struggling to satisfy his cold-blooded mother's ambitions at home. Modern cinema, so quick to be excited by confrontation, seems like the story's natural home.

And yet a doubt persists: how "relevant" can this Shakespeare play be made to the present? Coriolanus's tragedy begins after his return as a victorious general, when his mother (Vanessa Redgrave) and his mentor (Brian Cox) want to capitalise on his military success by turning him into a politician as consul to the Senate. Coriolanus succumbs to their idea, but won't play the part that political success requires. He won't flatter the rabble he despises, won't woo them, refuses to dissemble. His political opponents – two consummate performances by James Nesbitt and Paul Jesson – will of course do all these things and more. They know how to play the crowd, when to make it angry and when to please it, and naturally they win. We're familiar with this depiction of politics as a tactical game played out by self-seeking hypocrites; physically at least, Jesson's Brutus reminded me of Tony Blair's smooth legal chum, Lord (Charlie) Falconer. It's Coriolanus who is the unfamiliar figure in the film, the protagonist who tests our understanding and forfeits our sympathy because there is so very little in him to like.

His virtues are physical bravery and honesty: he'll fight to kill and he'll tell the truth. Beyond this austere and adamantine core, nothing matters to him. He holds the people he fights for in contempt and no streak of kindness inflects his pride and arrogance. Insulted, he prepares to destroy the city that insulted him. Until his last moments, he fails as a human being. Why he is as he is remains a mystery; even his chilly and manipulative mother, the likeliest reason on offer, has more connection to a kinder world.

Fiennes has made a fine film, and given a powerful performance, but at the end we can't mourn Coriolanus. The culprit – if that's the word – is Shakespeare. ■

Coriolanus opens in America and Canada, January 13th; Britain, January 20th; Russia, January 26th; Australia, February 23rd

ROLEX MENTOR & PROTÉGÉ
ARTS INITIATIVE

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THIRTY-TWO YEARS SEPARATE MUSICIANS BRIAN ENO AND BEN FROST. YET THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE GLOBALLY CELEBRATED ENO AND THE FAST EMERGING FROST STRUCK A RESONANT CHORD. EVERY TWO YEARS ROLEX INVITES SIX LUMINARIES IN MUSIC, DANCE, FILM, LITERATURE, THEATRE AND VISUAL ARTS TO MENTOR SIX GIFTED YOUNG ARTISTS. THEIR MUSICAL JOURNEY TOOK THEM BOTH TO NEW PLACES. "I'M HERE AS MUCH FOR HIM AS HE IS FOR ME," SAYS FROST. "WITH BEN, I FELT I COULD GO SOMEWHERE NEW THAT I HAVEN'T BEEN BEFORE." ADDS ENO. HARMONY INDEED.

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NOTES ON A VOICE

William Shakespeare

He was born in 1564 in a provincial English town, educated at the local grammar school, and became the greatest playwright of his age. His name was Christopher Marlowe, he wrote seven plays, and died aged 29. William Shakespeare was born the same year, also educated at his local grammar, wrote 37 plays, and became the greatest playwright of all. English provincial grammar schools in the 1570s must have been hot stuff. Shakespeare grew up reading Ovid's "Metamorphoses", comedies by Plautus and Terence and tragedies by Seneca. He studied rhetoric, the Bible and the English countryside. He practised composition or "turning", the school exercise of taking a passage from the classics and producing a variation. That became his career.

KEY DECISION To ditch the classical unities of time, place and action in favour of pleasing an audience of 1,500+ ranging from courtiers to groundlings. He crossed continents and spanned decades, he used ghosts, witches, shipwrecks, sword-fights, snatched kisses, mistaken identities, eavesdropping, cross-dressing, jokes, songs and masques. Since stage design was strictly limited, most of the visual effects, from the long shots to the close-ups, take place within the poetry.

STRONG POINTS He inherited the iambic pentameter from Chaucer, Spenser and Marlowe and raised it to a sublime complexity. From 1590 to 1611, he developed this ten-syllable short-long rhythm from the simple rhetorical constructions of the early history plays to the knotty fractured lines of the great tragedies, which make us feel the struggles of the characters: Brutus in his garden ponders the assassination of Caesar; Hamlet hangs back from killing his stepfather while he's at prayer; Leontes seethes with jealousy as his wife chats with his best friend. By capturing thought as it unfolds, Shakespeare presents a modern vision of human nature, suggestible, contradictory and pulsing with nervous energy. As Othello says to Iago: "I prithee speak to me/as thou dost ruminate, and give the worst of thoughts/the worst of words".

GOLDEN RULE Use other people's material. Shakespeare was the rewrite man Hollywood can only dream of. Give him Plutarch's 80-page essay on Mark Antony and he'll give you the 3,500-line tragedy "Antony and Cleopatra". He was unencumbered by modern anxieties of originality, only inventing the plot for "The Tempest" and one or two others. Unlike some rewrite men, he doesn't tidy up the original, he untidies it. He takes plays with happy endings and leaves them ambivalent, he obscures motive (Coleridge wrote of Iago's "motiveless malignity") and adds seemingly extraneous characters and glancing scenes. He introduced 2,000 new words ("horrid", "lonely", "zany") and many everyday phrases ("flesh and blood", "cruel to be kind"). His work occupies an eighth of the "Oxford Dictionary of Quotations".

FAVOURITE TRICK The 180-degree turnaround, one character changing the mind of another with sheer rhetorical verve: Richard III woos Lady Anne after killing her husband; Volumnia pleads with her implacable son Coriolanus not to sack Rome; Antony turns the crowd against the conspirators after Caesar's death.

ROLE MODEL Marlowe threw down one challenge after another: "The Jew of Malta", "Dido Queen of Carthage", "Edward II", "Dr Faustus" and "Tamburlaine Pts 1 & 2". Shakespeare responded with "The Merchant of Venice", "Antony and Cleopatra", "Richard II", "Macbeth", "Henry IV Pts 1 & 2" and "Henry V".

TYPICAL SENTENCE Out of nearly 1m words, the sentence that best captures the internal drama, the unbearable pressure of the divided mind, is in "Julius Caesar": "Between the acting of a dreadful thing/And the first motion, all the interim is/Like a phantasma or a hideous dream." - ROBERT BUTLER

The World Shakespeare Festival 2012 includes all 37 plays staged at the Globe, London, in 37 languages; Simon Russell Beale as Timon of Athens at the National; Jonathan Pryce as King Lear at the Almeida; and the exhibition Shakespeare: Staging the World at the British Museum

ILLUSTRATION **KATHRYN RATHKE**

FOUND IN TRANSLATION

A god of small things

AUTHOR **ROBERT WALSER**
ENGLISH TITLE **BERLIN STORIES**
ORIGINAL TITLE **ROBERT WALSER: BERLIN GIBT IMMER DEN TON AN (2006)**
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE **GERMAN**
TRANSLATOR **SUSAN BERNOFSKY**

These aren't quite stories, but alloys of fiction, journalism and penetrating reflection. And the German title ("Berlin always sets the tone") is more interesting and accurate than the English one. Robert Walser (1878-1956), who was Swiss, moved to Berlin in 1905, drawn by its "seductive gleam" and hoping to make his name as a writer, before sloping home again in 1913. He made money by contributing prose sketches to newspapers and magazines. There are 38 here, only three of them published in English before, and they are like flecks of precious metal.

W.G. Sebald called Walser a "clairvoyant of the small". He chose humble subjects: a walk in the park or a ride on an electric streetcar. These modest activities are elevated by his eye for fabulous images. A café singer's voice is like "the progress of a snail, so resplendently languorous, so lazy, so brown, so very reptant, so slimy". But the collection is more than a series of snapshots. It is also an oblique autobiography of an outsider. Ladies are seen on park benches but never engaged, and when, in the longest story here, Walser befriends his landlady Frau Scheer, it's an alliance of loners. He died in 1956, while crossing a wintry field in Switzerland. His end is eerily prefigured by the coda to this collection, "A Homecoming in the Snow" (1917), where, in his retreat from Berlin, the familiar Swiss snow is like a "splendidly warm coat".

His solitude makes his joy catch in the throat. "How lovely", he says about a walk in the Tiergarten, "to be doing something another person is doing as well." These are the stories of a man in love with the world, but unable to take part in it. - SIMON WILLIS

New York Review Books, January 24th

Maggie Fergusson *Eight Good Books*

Jeanette Winterson on her mother, Joan Didion on her daughter, and Anthony Horowitz's Holmes

FICTION **The House of Silk by Anthony Horowitz** (Orion, hardback, out now). Within seconds of being invited by the Conan Doyle estate to write a new Sherlock Holmes novel, Anthony Horowitz was off the starting-blocks, piecing together a plot as involved and involving as the best of the originals. All the old familiars are here: Lestrade, Wiggins, Moriarty, the warmth of 221b Baker Street and the freezing fogs outside. At the centre, however, is a crime Conan Doyle would not have contemplated, and, chronicling it after Holmes's death, Watson becomes unaccustomedly wistful. The text is pot-holed with typos, but Horowitz rides through them with panache.

The Art of Fielding by Chad Harbach (4th Estate, hardback, out January 19th). You may need to bone up on baseball to enjoy this, but it's actually about friendship, failure and coming of age. Set in a college on the shores of Lake Michigan, the story revolves around a student team preparing to exchange the security of the baseball diamond for the complexities of the real world. When their gifted shortstop is afflicted with the sports equivalent of writer's block, all their lives begin to unravel. Harbach's prose is sharp-eyed but big-hearted. Over 500 pages, he immerses you in his imaginary campus, provoking nostalgia for youth, and relief that it's over.

SHORT STORIES **We Others by Steven Millhauser** (Corsair, hardback, out now). Millhauser, a Pulitzer prize-winner, is drawn to the surreal and uncanny, blooming on the fringes of ordinary lives "like growths of mold". His title story is narrated by a ghost who, yearning for companionship, breaks the heart of a lonely teacher. Another, the inspiration for the film "The Illusionist", follows a magician so good at creating illusions that he becomes, himself, illusory. In a third, a giant shopping mall seduces, then enslaves, an entire town. Behind his courteous prose, Millhauser seems to be holding something back, like a doctor soft-pedalling on grim news.

FINANCE **Boomerang by Michael Lewis** (Allen Lane, hardback, out now). Following "The Big Short", and again exercising his twin passions for high finance and human folly, Michael Lewis shifts his focus from America to Europe on a hilarious journey of "financial-disaster tourism" through the countries that gorged most grossly through the credit boom. Lewis enables you to see the wood and the trees, so while getting to grips with European debt you also form a mental gallery of bizarre vignettes: the governor of Iceland's Central Bank holed up in his office writing poems; or Ireland's Bertie Ahern exclaiming, on the collapse of Lehman's, "They had testicles everywhere!"

MEMOIRS **Blue Nights by Joan Didion** (Fourth Estate, hardback, out now). "What greater grief can there be for mortals", Euripides asked, "than to see their children dead?" Joan Didion's only daughter, Quintana Roo, died in 2005, two years after Didion's husband John Gregory Dunne, mourned so memorably in "The Year of Magical Thinking". Here, her grief is just as forensically examined, but all the more devastating for being tinged with guilt. Quintana was adopted, and troubled. Were the two connected? Didion's feel for the material world – fabrics, food and flowers – assumes a terrible poignancy as she contemplates oblivion.

Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal? by Jeanette Winterson (Cape, hardback, out now). The question was asked by Winterson's adoptive mother. Mrs Winterson, as her daughter chillingly styles her, is the star of this artful memoir, comic but appalling, a frugal, religiose tyrant who dispensed End Time commandments and hoarded Royal Albert china. Jeanette, born Janet, "self-invented", racked by rage, asks her own questions. Why is she so bad at loving? Why did her real mother give her away? Was Mrs Winterson perhaps not "normal" herself? How does a mind work with its own "brokenness"? Her answers are tentative, but fierce, funny, harrowing.

OUR BOOKS OF THE YEAR 2011

FICTION **The Stranger's Child by Alan Hollinghurst** (Picador, hardback). One of the delights of this novel is the sly relish with which Hollinghurst pokes fun at the pretentiousness of the literary world. So it's ironic that in the brouhaha surrounding this year's Man Booker prize it was considered by some to be too literary to be "accessible" – like a Ming vase, best left on the shelf. Yes, it's beautifully written: every sentence considered but unshowy, every word pulling its weight. But it's also mischievous, moving, deliciously witty and compulsively readable. In fact, to steal a phrase from the Booker judge Chris Mullin, it zips along.

NON-FICTION **People Who Eat Darkness by Richard Lloyd Parry** (Cape, hardback). As Asia correspondent for the *Times*, Parry covered the Lucie Blackman murder, and it got under his skin. This book, the fruit of ten years' work, is powered by an obsessive desire to tease out not only the facts of the case but its psychological mysteries. The more light he sheds on what happened, the wider the darkness of his title spreads, engulfing not just the murderer, Joji Obara, but the Tokyo police and the Blackman family. The book combines a meticulous fairness with the pace and suspense of a thriller. ■

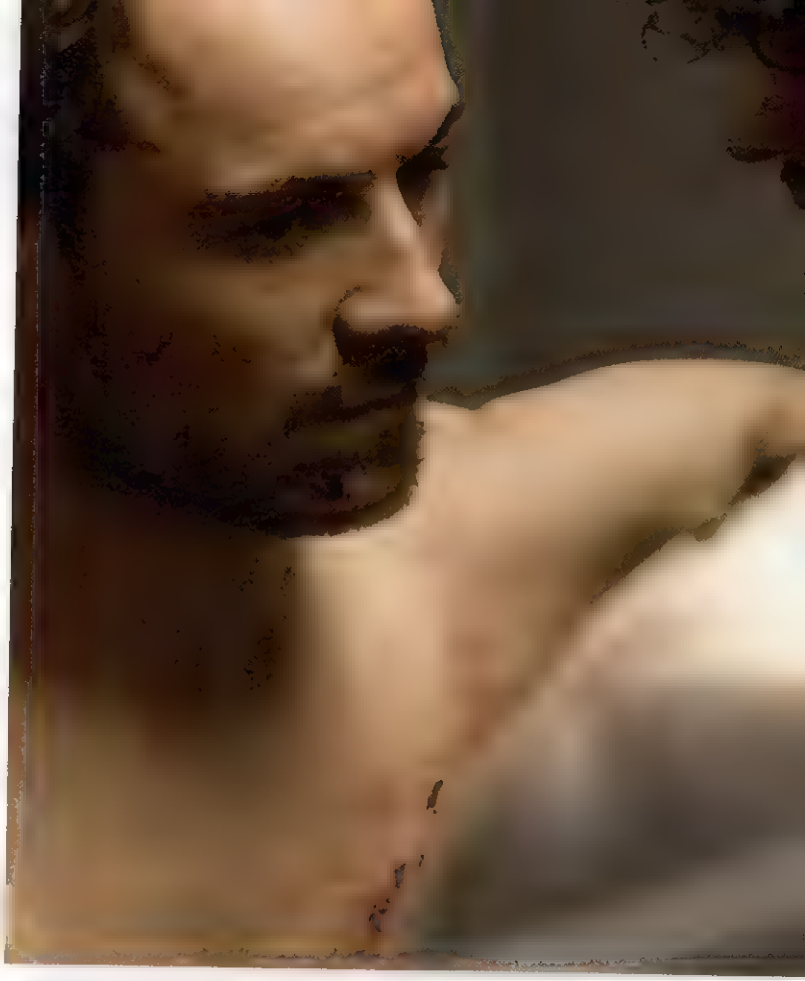
THE VISUAL CV

Michael Fassbender

After a slow start, this Irish-German actor is now looking like a big star. Isabel Lloyd picks his eight best roles

2003 The Quarrel It's only a Guinness ad, but at 26, Fassbender – German-born, Irish-raised – is already pitching for Hollywood. Bestubbled and determined, he marches and swims halfway across the world to square up to his betrayed brother (and pouting girlfriend) in a New York bar. "Sorry" he scowls – then melts into a smile. Pints, hugs and sly glances from the girlfriend follow. The camera's suckered by his lazuli eyes and dark, ruffle-me hair; Fassbender puts down his marker as an actor who does triple shots of intensity, spiked with the vermouth of charm.

2008 The Devil's Whore The English civil war was never like this, but wouldn't it have been fun if it was? A ripe TV confection of half-witted history and heaving bosoms is pumped up by steroidal acting. Fassbender, as the pointy-tached Leveller colonel, Thomas Rainsborough, switches between the pure magnesium flare of political belief and a charcoal smoulder of longing for Andrea Riseborough's feisty heroine. Among audiences, a new verb is coined: "to Fassbend", or stare open-mouthed at male totty-talent.



2008 Hunger He might have shed a prodigal two stone to play Bobby Sands in Steve McQueen's poetic film about the Thatcher-era H-Block hunger strikes, but there's more to Fassbender's performance than diet. His Sands is a wideboy in search of sainthood, a gobby shite who grips the Republican cause like a lover. And in the final, near-silent contemplations of his shrunken body, as he spreadeagles his death before the lens, you almost see his spirit rise like a bird from the wasted cage of his ribs.

2009 Fish Tank Mia, a mouthy but essentially tender council-estate teenager, gets a crush on her mother's good-looking new boyfriend. It's a plot so slim that for Andrea Arnold's film to stick, viewers have to follow the same innocent arc as Mia, from infatuation to execration. Fassbender plays it like a Stradivarius. From his first, tiny glance at Mia, to his final, stifled violence, he lets you slide inch by inch behind the mask of handsome, to find a soul so shallow that love can only suffocate in it.

ADVERTISING ARCHIVES. ALLSTAR. CHANNEL 4. EYEVINE. REX

2009 Inglourious Basterds Quentin Tarantino's second-world-war fantasy is lumpy with set-pieces, but the apple in its strudel is the shoot-out in the bierkeller, with Fassbender's undercover British soldier at its centre. It is one of the few times he has used an accent other than his own, nasally inflected Irish. He clips the 1940s English consonants as neatly as a cigar, and perfects the stiff-hipped, shoulder-led strut of the period military man: Douglas Bader, as he might have been played by Sean Connery.

2011 Jane Eyre It's a tough job, inhabiting an archetype. Fassbender's Mr Rochester succeeds because of a thread of human fragility that whets the edge of his menace. In the scene where he offers to take Jane to bed, he matches Mia Wasikowska's lambent governess breath for breath as she flickers between desire and decency. Cary Fukunaga's camera lingers on their faces, watching emotions pass across them like wind over the moors – and a female audience sighs in gratitude.

2012 Shame Back to McQueen for a film that is notionally about sex, actually about psychology: the self-defeating pyschology of addiction. Fassbender embodies that emptiness, stripped in body and flayed in soul. When he orgasms, his grimace shows a man impaled on his own despair. It's "Confessions of a Window Cleaner" remade by Munch. And it proves that Fassbender has the chops, as well as the abs, to be more than just another movie star.
Shame *British release January 13th*

2012 A Dangerous Method Christopher Hampton's lukewarm script – notionally about psychology, actually about sex – is further cooled by the lack of chemistry between Fassbender's Jung and his hysteric patient Keira Knightley (who, in lieu of a characterisation, sticks out her jaw). The real fire comes as the stiff-necked Jung meets Viggo Mortensen's porpoise-sleek Freud: in their first psychoanalytic session they talk, apparently, for 13 hours. About penises. ■
A Dangerous Method *British release February 10th*

PLACES

A slippery business

On the islands of the Dalmatian coast, the fishermen have been working the same way for centuries, but now the spectre of European politics is muddying the waters. **James Hopkin** reports from Hvar

One afternoon in early September, I was swimming in the warm, translucent waters of the Adriatic without any need of a mask or a snorkel. I swam with a large sea bass beneath me, and then, farther out, bigger groups. Suddenly, very close to me, a shoal of smaller fish leapt out of the water, first four then eight, 12, 16, until hundreds of them seemed to be flying above the surface, forming a ten-metre-long arc, like a piscine rainbow, their scales coloured sequins in the sun. The fish then dived back in, all at the same point, like a slowly disappearing tail.

Magical visions are not uncommon in Dalmatia, such is the natural beauty of Croatia's southernmost and most Mediterranean cluster of islands. Ever since the Greeks ventured up the Adriatic in the 4th century BC, founding the towns of Vis, Stari Grad, Hvar and Korcula, visitors have been entranced by the unblemished skies and sea-mist horizons, by the clear water turning turquoise in the reflected light of Aleppo pines, by the rocky hills and bays at sunset, and by the abundance of Mediterranean herbs, fruits and fresh fish. Indeed, those four towns became leaders in fishing and shipbuilding, and one of Europe's earliest depictions of a sailing boat was found painted on a Greek ceramic in a cave on the island of Hvar.

When visiting one of Dalmatia's archipelagos, you can be forgiven for thinking you have stepped back in time as you marvel at the ornate bell-towers, turrets and stone alleyways shaped by the occupying Venetians, Austrians, French. Or you may feel you have stepped out of time altogether: measured by gradations of sun and sea and sky, the days do not need dating. Antiquarian chimes sound like a spoon struck against a mess tin, then you hear the bells humming to a halt, followed by the creaking of the rope. Yet time has a way of intruding: Croatia is set for accession to the European Union in July 2013, and there is great concern among the islanders that their tranquillity – and worse, their livelihoods and their age-old fishing tradition – will be lost.

On Hvar, the Bibic family is legendary. I met the paterfamilias, Tonci Bibic, on the harbour, underneath the elegant stone arches close to the 14th-century Arsenal, where war galleys were once repaired. Like a fisherman from a fairy tale, he was portly, bearded, jocular, his deep voice a common feature among Dalmatian men. They say here, "Slavic heart, Mediterranean soul", and Tonci's words were enlivened by hand gestures and "Eh!"s, a response that can both answer or encourage the speaker. Setting up a collapsible table and chair, he positioned his old-fashioned scales and rusty weights, sat down with a coffee, and waited for the day's catch to arrive. I asked him how long his family had been fishing. "Six generations," he smiled. "Three hundred years."

"Slavic heart, Mediterrranean soul"
ABOVE Tonci Bibic, paterfamilias and fisher king
LEFT A fisherman cleans his nets in the harbour

Tonci's crew of nine (brothers, sons, cousins) go out at 4.30 each morning on three wooden boats of about six metres long, and return in the midday sun. I watched them come in, the small decks busy with nets, ropes, tarpaulins, rusty anchors. Two younger men leapt off and disappeared, while a scrawny old guy, his chest covered in sailor's tattoos, stacked a dozen plastic crates of mainly white fish, the most expensive kind, such as dentex and sea bass. A huge, sweating bearded man then hauled a large plastic tub of salt water onto the dock in which they washed the >

PHOTOGRAPHS **ALFREDO D'AMATO**

> fish, before parcelling out a certain amount for Tonci to sell. He told me his crew catch about 150kg each day in summer, and double that in the winter when it's only the cheaper blue fish. "But in winter", he explained, "there is sometimes half or full month when we can't go out. Bad weather, too dangerous. Eh!"

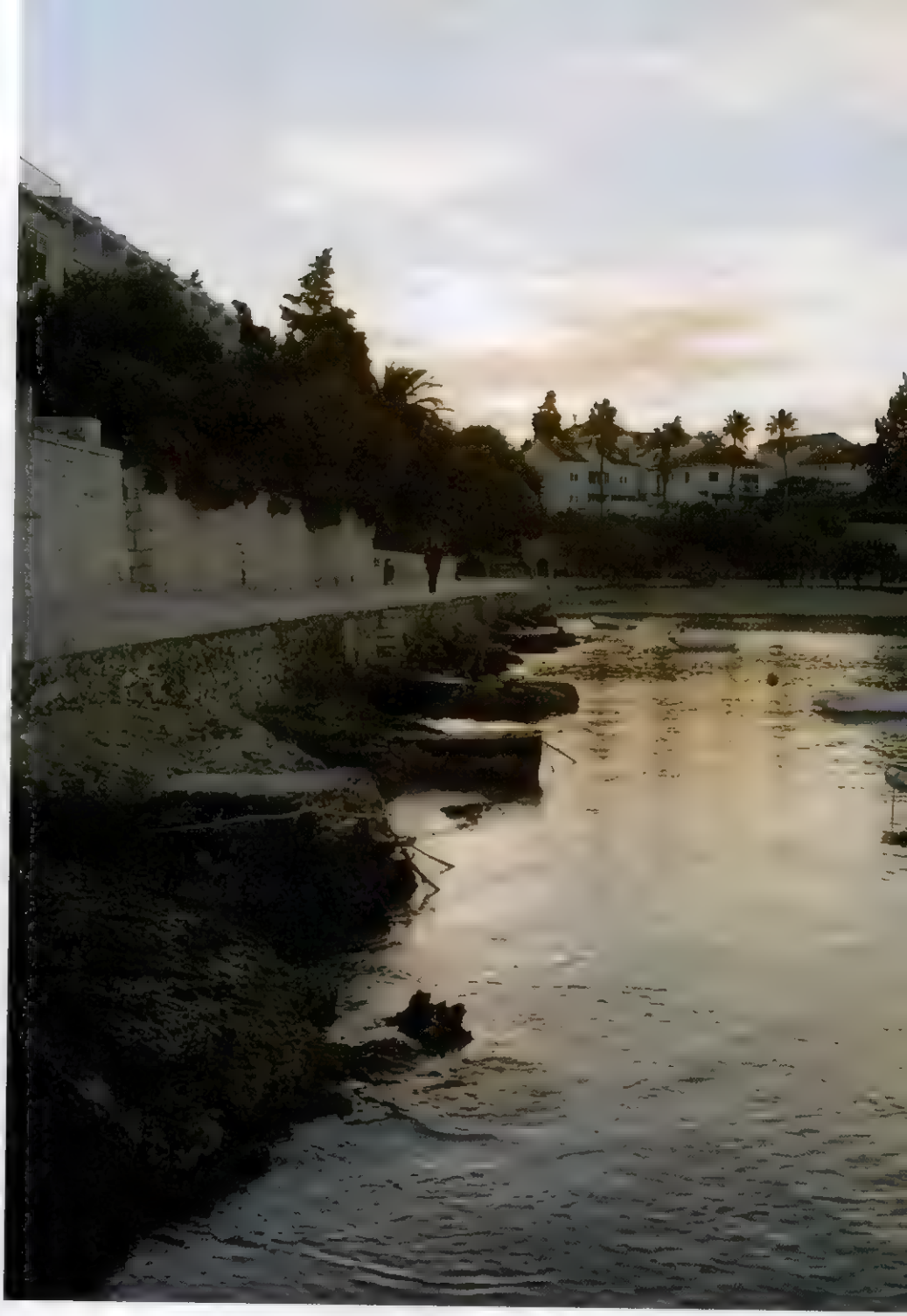
Weighing each fish on the scales, he was doing good business at 60 kuna (£7) for half a kilo. Behind him, the old guy pushed the bristles of a broom-head through the salt water at everyone's feet. At present, the Bibic clan is one of only three families on the island to hold a special licence for traditional fishing. I asked Tonci if EU regulations would force him to upgrade his boats. But such was his easy air – they say here, like a mantra, "*pomalo!*" (take it easy!) – that he did not seem the least bit concerned.

"No need to modernise, to change," he replied, smiling as he wrapped another handful of wet fish in a plastic bag, an eye showing through. "The EU will mean better marketing."

His bravado is born of success. Indeed, the family's enterprise is astonishing: his wife sells a portion of the catch each morning in the town's fish market. His mother and daughters run an excellent seafood restaurant, Junior, just steps away from Tonci's impromptu stall. Meanwhile, each morning, the mother of another branch of the Bibic family bounces across the water on a speedboat to Split to sell half the catch there. Even Tonci's youngest son is on the crew this summer, but he doesn't want him to become a professional fisherman. Having admitted that the catch was "not as good as last season's", perhaps he's thinking there won't be enough fishing left for his son? He dismissed that too. "It varies from year to year, eh! I don't want him to fish because the work is hard and dangerous. And in winter, on a rough sea, too dangerous."

A very different view of the same reality can be found just metres away. At the other end of the harbour, right on the water, the Gariful fish restaurant is one of the best in Dalmatia. Each evening, when the sunset is turning mauve across the bay, and the little wooden boats jostle alongside exclusive yachts, the restaurant displays the day's catch on three ice-beds: from red mullet to John Dory to a whole swordfish. Yet the owner, Ivan Gospodnetic, is worried. He told me that his crew of seven boats and ten fishermen brought in a staggering 50% lower catch this season than in previous years. "Others are catching fish out of season when it is forbidden to catch certain types of fish," he added. "No one is taking care of that."

NEXT DAY I smacked across the waves in a classic, wood-trimmed speedboat owned by Dario, a Croatian friend of mine. A former soldier, he is now the owner of one of Hvar's most successful bars, the Bar Kiva, which he took on in 1994 during the *Domovinski Rat*, the Homelands war. Dario is a brilliant raconteur. Chewing on a stem of lavender, for which the island is famous, he told me about Napoleon's time on Hvar and how the great general ordered the roof of St Marco's church to be removed in the interests of hygiene as locals flocked to bury their plague-ridden dead. He told me, too, about the time when the Russians and the French were firing at each other across the bay, and about all the sunken galleons lying on the seabed. We were going to the island of Vis, its Mount Hum already visible like a slumbering mammoth in the mist. I had



A safe harbour?
Accession to the EU may threaten the calm of Hvar and its residents

arranged to meet Professor Josko Bozanic of Split University and Ars Halieutica, "a multidisciplinary scientific programme" which seeks to preserve "the maritime cultural heritage of the Croatian Adriatic coast".

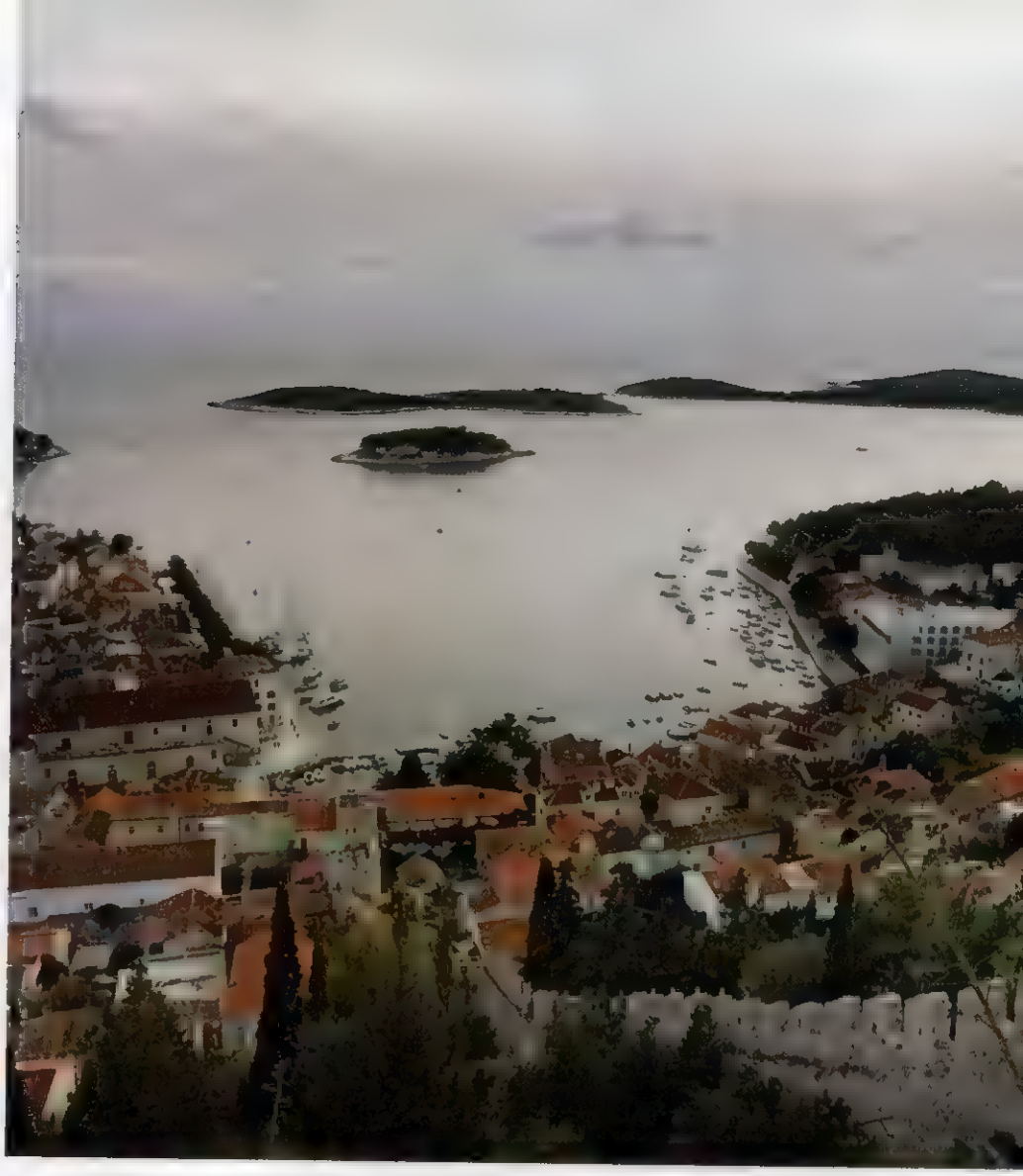
The town of Komiza on Vis looks as if it's been sculpted from sunlight and stone, and then tucked away beneath slopes covered in vines and fruit trees. In this fisherman's enclave, there is a corner of café-bars the locals call "the living room", over which lives the oldest woman on the island who sometimes peers out between green shutters only to retreat seconds later. It was in this "living room" that I met the professor, over half a litre of Karlovacko beer. We looked across the marina to the 16th-century Venetian tower, the Kastel, that houses the fishing museum. Professor Bozanic told me that there are currently about 100 fishing boats registered in the town, worked by families who have fished for centuries.

"But what will happen to these boats, to these families when we join the EU?" he said, with obvious concern. "Professional fisherman from Komiza have built small, economical boats of eight to 11 metres long, catching only high quality, big fish with their long lines of about 3,000 hooks. But they will not be able to fish more than six miles from Vis because EU regulations state that boats that size are not legal to go 100 miles away as they do now. Whereas the big fishing boats from the mainland and from Italy can do so. Other big companies will join them."

I asked him about over-fishing. "There is a lower and lower fish stock in the Adriatic," admits the professor, "but what is the reason?" Again he mentions Italian boats encroaching on Croatian waters, and also boats from mainland ports which pay €1,000 for a licence and then are difficult to track. "Fishing administration is centralised in [the capital] Zagreb. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development does not consult the science of fishing enough. Also, nobody knows exactly the quantity of catch because a great percentage of it is sold illegally to the Italian market." Such illicit practices are possible because, given the length of Croatia's coastline, it is hard to monitor the catch, equipment and vessels. The ministry is promising a "new strategic framework" that will comply with the Common Fisheries Policy, while benefiting from EU money and schemes.

The stars came out over the sea. The professor ordered two more glasses of Karlovacko. Although he is one of the originators of the *gajeta falkusa* project, a painstaking reconstruction of Komiza's traditional one-masted fishing boat, the professor was keen to point out that his views are not based on nostalgia, but on sustainability. "These boats", he said, gesturing to the harbour, "fish using traditional means. They do not trawl the seabed with huge nets like the bigger boats, and destroy the sea's ecosystem and deplete the stock. So the EU should protect the smaller boats."

In Dalmatia, fish and wine are considered part of a well-balanced diet. Indeed, there is a Croatian saying: "A fish must swim three times: in the sea, in olive oil (while cooking), and in wine (in your stomach)." When I ate at Konoba Stoncica, beneath a roof of palm fronds, and overlooking a rare sandy beach – most bays in Dalmatia are rocky – I was treated to a platter of grilled red mullet, sea bass, John Dory and bream, not to mention Mediterranean vegetables cooked in olive oil, and a delicious mashed potato sea- >



soned with herbs. Batting away a dozen fat wasps, I reached for a lemon slice. Pino, my guide and driver, stopped me. "No!" he exclaimed. "You use lemon only for stinky fish!"

At midday the following day, back on Hvar, I entered a huge bank-like vault filled with ice. Three enormous tuna, each weighing about 300kg, looked unreal lying there in this walk-in fridge. I was in the fish-processing centre owned by Josko Zuvela, a dynamic young entrepreneur. With an annual turnover of €10m, around 200 employees, and 40 big fishing boats, his family business has been thriving since 1992. We were in Luka Vira, an old port on the other side of the hill from Hvar town. Josko rolled over one of the tuna which here, unlike some places in the Mediterranean, are sustainably fished. He motioned how best to kill one, by cutting the artery under the left fin.

Outside the vault, on one side of the building, a woman was filleting and cleaning fish, all entrails and stinking juices. Huge, water-filled tubs were filled with living clams. On the other side, Josko's father was stirring a large vat of grapes, from their own vineyards. Josko told me they export 95% of their fish, most of it to Italy. Why there? I asked, gagging a little at the olfactory clash of fish innards and sweet syrup. "They have already destroyed their side of the sea," he said. "They will pressurise the EU. And if the EU doesn't agree about our sea, the Italians will come with bigger boats, bigger engines, bigger nets." So it seems he's not a big fan of accession? "EU is bullshit," he said. "Administration in Brussels is making money out of the EU. No one else. A few years ago, the EU offered me €600,000 for each boat to stop working. I said 'No, thanks'. We have all the correct licences."

After the climb
TOP Hvar seen from its castle.
ABOVE Vines producing the local bugava grape grow overhead

We walked out to the bay under another hot sun; it was Croatia's longest summer for a century. There were several boats 15 to 20 metres long in the harbour, green and white, with huge winches and rusty hulls, a couple of which Josko bought from Scotland and spent €1m fitting with radar and sonar. Suddenly, from these silent boats, men appeared, laughing, shouting, chatting across the bay. A seagull swooped and plucked a fish from the sea, and an old man sitting on the end of the dock fishing with a hook on a piece of string landed a big sea bass. "The Japanese come here to buy our fish for Tokyo," added Josko, beaming.

Early every morning, the island's restaurant owners phone. Usually the first is Tomislav Rudan, of the Giaxa restaurant in Hvar. "He asks, because he knows, 'What is fresh?'" said Josko. "Whereas 70% of them don't have a clue. They will ask, 'What's best quality?' But the best quality fish is fresh fish!" And he gave me a slap on the back.

A little later, we jumped into one of his refrigerated vans with "*Od mora do stola*!" emblazoned on the side: "From the sea to the table!" We drove along

From the steep, winding roads, we saw the Hvar archipelago lined up like stepping stones

steep winding roads with views of the Pakleni islands, the Hvar archipelago, lined up like stepping stones to Vis. Then we travelled down a long tunnel through the mountain and within minutes we arrived in Stari Grad on the island's north coast, one of the oldest settlements in Europe. It was here that the 16th-century poet, Petar Hektorovic built his house, with its mullet-filled pond, and wrote his epic poem about a fishing trip with his friends, Paskoj and Nikola.

Now the town's harbour was crammed with wooden boats, the windows of their little cabins turning orange in the sun. I saw one old man paddle out to sea, on his knees, in a vessel half the length of a bathtub, before laying out a small net. I watched a squid fisherman go out about an hour before sunset. Having tied the steering wheel with thin rope, he lowered the nets as the small-engined boat chugged its way round in a circle. And I found the workshop of an old carpenter, tools arranged meticulously on the walls, a giant vice in the centre. Happy to have a visitor, he led me into the next room. It was filled with models of Croatian sailing boats, including the *gajeta falkusa*, each made with extraordinary craftsmanship, then hand-painted. The models were a moving reminder that Stari Grad was once a thriving port.

These days, though, the town has little beyond a sardine factory and a fish farm, the latter a contentious topic. Though Professor Bozanic believes that fish farms "can save the fish stock in the Adriatic", others are not so sure. Some feed their stock industrial food, which fattens them up, but makes the fish difficult to grill as their skin blisters easily. The best farms are those that use smaller fish for feed, though such places are harder to find. Charmed by the stillness of Stari Grad, I returned to Josko's van. He wanted to talk about his restaurant, Marinero. "We buy in only coke and water," he explained, proudly. "No cheese or meat, only our own fish and seafood. Everything on the plate comes from the island of Hvar."

That night, I ate there: tuna steaks with a glass of local wine made from the island's famous bugava grape. Only metres from the sea, the tables are arranged along a cobbled path that leads to St Marco's. The scent of warm pine drifted through the old town. But that evening there was something else in the air, too: the rich harmonies of a traditional Dalmatian *a capella* choir came floating out of the church. The roof, you see, has never been replaced.

Later, as I was finishing my meal, I recalled Josko's final words to me. "Remember!" he'd said. "The richest man in the 21st century is he who knows what to eat." I raised my glass. I drank to that. I hoped the EU would agree. ■

Holidays on ice

Some hotels have their very own skating rinks. **Claire Wrathall** laces up her boots

USA THE RANCH AT ROCK CREEK, MONTANA
They ask you to sign quite a scary disclaimer before letting you on the ice at this guest ranch. But then it's not a conventional rink, it's a pond that opens – for skating and hockey – as soon as it's frozen solid (usually in mid-December). The ranch is owned by James Manley, the founder and CEO of the boutique investment bank Atlantic Pacific Capital, who bought it as a private retreat where he could live out his childhood Wild West fantasies, and turned it into a hotel in 2010. Most guests come in summer, but this year it's open all winter, offering skiing, snow-shoeing, sledding, sleigh rides and even horse-riding when the trails aren't icy.
From $990 per person, all inclusive; theranchatrockcreek.com

FRANCE HÔTEL PLAZA ATHÉNÉE, PARIS
From early December till January 31st, the elegant interior courtyard of the super-soigné Plaza Athénée becomes an ice rink. Surrounded by a forest of frosted, fairy-lit fir trees it's small (just 11m by 11m), but perfectly maintained by a team of ten. And because it's accessible only to the hotel's guests, it is rarely crowded.
Doubles from €865, room only; plaza-athenee-paris.com

GERMANY KEMPINSKI HOTEL TASCHENBERGPALAIS, DRESDEN
Built in 1706 by the Elector of Saxony for one of his 13 mistresses, this splendid Baroque palace is across the square from the opera house. It was largely destroyed when Dresden was bombed in 1945, but rebuilt as a hotel in the late 1990s. In winter, an ice rink is set up in the courtyard to coincide with the city's vast Christmas markets. Open till 10pm, and until January 29th, it's a magical sight after dark. Pretzels and Glühwein are available in the candle-lit log cabin beside it.
Doubles from €249, room only; kempinski-dresden.de

SWITZERLAND SUVRETTA HOUSE, ST MORITZ
High in the Upper Engadine Valley, just outside St Moritz, the venerable Suvretta House opened in 1912. The hotel's own drag lift takes guests direct to the chairlift that goes up Corviglia mountain, where there are 80km of pistes. It caters to other winter sports too, notably curling. Skating is on the championship-standard rink in front of the hotel, with its wraparound view of snowy Alps. The professional coach is happy to work with skaters of all levels.
Doubles from SFr1,260 (£900) including breakfast; suvrettahouse.ch

UAE HYATT REGENCY, DUBAI
It's a telling detail that although "skates are provided, socks are available for sale" at this ice rink – who wears socks in Dubai? If you want to work on your lutzes and salchows, professional figure skaters are on hand as coaches. Despite its essentially urban location, the hotel also has a nine-hole pitch-and-putt golf course, three tennis courts, a 200-metre jogging track and a rooftop outdoor pool, where the water is cooled – yes, cooled – to 29-30°C in summer. It's not the green option for ice-skating, either.
Doubles from AED670 (£116), room only; dubai.regency.hyatt.com

ILLUSTRATION **NEIL GOWER**

BEING THERE

Madrid

"To survive, you have to play by their rules." **Fiona Maharg-Bravo** reports on day-to-day life in a city that never sits down to a meal until it has to

AT FIRST, THE hardest thing about living in Madrid is making it through the morning. Most lunch meetings don't start before 2.30, and they last a couple of hours. Then the tricky part is going back to work.

For outsiders, living in Madrid is like being forever jet-lagged. I was no stranger to the marathon days, having spent most of my childhood summers in a small village near Salamanca, where my mother was born. My family lived in Madrid for a year when I was 14, and my husband is Spanish. But moving here with my own family four years ago and adjusting to the rhythms of Madrid, after living most of my life in Chicago and London, was not easy.

Madrid is chaotic and orderly at the same time, its citizens caught in the slow and the fast lanes

Madrid is chaotic and orderly at the same time, its citizens caught in the slow and the fast lanes. There are at least four rush hours a day. The working day can often stretch to 8 or 9pm, and most restaurants don't start to buzz until 10. Clubs get going much later than that, when everyone gets a second wind. "Nobody goes to bed in Madrid until they have killed the night," Hemingway wrote, decades ago. It still rings true.

Commuters are in their cars as early as 7am, filling the air with a cacophony. Cars are still the preferred mode of transport, even though Madrid has a superb metro that is heavily subsidised and laughingly cheap compared with London's tired tube. Well-heeled Madrileños are seldom seen on the metro, though they are a bit more partial to the bus.

To survive, a friend advised, you have to play by their rules. This means having a coffee and a nibble at noon. It means running errands at 11 on a weekday because most shops are still closed at lunch time, on Sundays and the various public holidays that are hard to keep track of. It means always running a little late. Ideally, it means going home for lunch and resting afterwards. Distances are short in the city centre, but many workers live in the sprawling suburbs. The siesta tradition, at least on weekdays, is nearly defunct.

Madrileños are sleep-deprived, but they may not know any different. Children are trained for it, from the time they can be pushed out of the door in a pram at midnight on a warm summer's evening. My young children's friends may not get to sleep before 10pm on a weeknight, and are up at 7.30 to catch the school bus. No wonder they tend to sleep in late at weekends, like their exhausted parents.

Living in Madrid requires a further type of stamina. The locals love to talk. I was having lunch with some American friends at a city-centre restaurant when one of them was struck by something about the next table. It was a table of five Spanish women, probably in their 40s, and they were all talking and shouting at the same time. And this went on for two hours.

The chaos is deceptive, however. Family homes tend to be orderly and clean. Lunch is always at least two courses, the table perfectly set. Everything is ironed – even sheets, socks and underwear. This is largely thanks to plentiful domestic help. Spain's construction boom attracted millions of immigrants, mostly from Latin America, and many are employed in Spanish homes. They are the unsung heroines who grease the wheels of life for many families in Madrid. Cheap help allows both parents to work those long hours and still have a house that runs like clockwork.

Spanish children are as impeccably dressed as their parents: at weekends, you see siblings dressed in the same clothes, like the von Trapp family. The smarter shops make this easy by sorting clothes by styles, rather than size. Protocol is observed elsewhere, too. Children are insistently told to kiss everyone hello and goodbye, though parents seem to be more laissez-faire about other habits. Rare is the day that one of my children doesn't come home with >

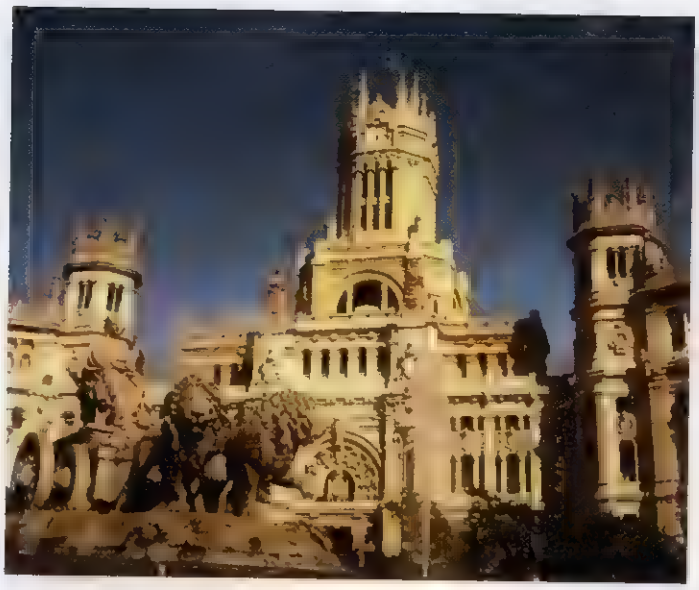
GOING NATIVE

Where to stay If money's no object, try one of these charming boutique five-star hotels. **Hotel Santo Mauro** is an historic mansion (ask for a quiet room) with its own restaurant, la Biblioteca. **Hotel Orfila** is a small 19th-century building tucked away on the Calle de Orfila. **Hotel de las Letras** has modern, spacious rooms in the heart of cultural Madrid, just off the Gran Via.

Where to eat At lunchtime, look out for "menu del día", an economical set menu. For tapas, try the **Mercado de San Miguel**, a gourmet covered market with beautiful stalls where you can sample cheeses, oysters, *pata negra* ham or consommé from Lhardy, one of Madrid's oldest restaurants. **Lavinia**, at Calle de José Ortega y Gasset 16, is a fine wine shop with a restaurant on the second floor which is open for lunch. **Mentidero de la Villa** serves outstanding modern Mediterranean food at Calle Almagro 20. **El Lando** offers classic Spanish food – order *huevos rotos* (eggs cracked onto fries) – on the Calle Plaza de Gabriel Miró. One of the best Basque restaurants is **Goizeka**, at the Hotel Wellington on Calle Velázquez. And don't miss the South-East Asian gem **Sudestada** at Calle Ponzano 85.

Streetwise The centre can be explored on foot, but taxis are cheap and plentiful. Join the other tourists at the **Palacio Real** and have a coffee in the Café de Oriente by the Teatro >

Eating late
LEFT Catching the waiter's eye.
FAR LEFT Hemingway's old haunt on the Plaza de Santa Ana



Real Madrid
The Cibeles fountain, in front of the neo-classical buildings of the Plaza de Cibeles, has been adopted by the local football team

> Real. Then wander the narrow streets of the neighbourhoods in the old quarter, including **La Latina** (great on a Sunday), **Chueca**, the slightly grungy **Malasaña** or **Plaza Santa Ana**. The Gran Via, which has just turned 100, ends in the Calle de Alcalá, opposite the beautiful Circulo de Bellas Artes, the Bank of Spain and la Plaza de Cibeles. These regal buildings are spectacular at night. Hold on tight to your handbag or wallet: the city-centre thieves are highly professional.

What to see Madrid is dripping with great art: don't miss the **Prado**, with its Velázquez collection, at Calle Ruiz de Alarcón 23, or the **Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum** in the ducal Palacio de Villahermosa on the Paseo del Prado. The **Museo Sorolla** is attractive, set in his former home and garden at Paseo General Martínez Campos 37. **Microteatro por Dinero** (at Calle Loreto y Chicote 9) offers 15-minute plays for tiny audiences in small rooms: you can almost touch the actors, often rising stars.

Shopping If you're pressed for time, go to any **Corte Inglés** department store, or stroll along the refurbished pavements of the Calle Serrano in the elegant **Barrio de Salamanca**. Fashionistas can head for the boutiques around Calle de Argensola in **Salesas**. The **Gran Via** has some good high-street stores, as does the nearby **Calle Preciados** which leads to the **Puerta del Sol**. - FM-B

> sweet wrappers from some event at school: sweets are seen as more of a right than a privilege. When getting out of a lift, you must say "see you later" even if you'll never see the people again in your life. Yet for all these conventions, Madrileños are known for being abrupt, even rude – probably for lack of sleep. And the pavements, although cleaner than before, are still apt to be spattered with dog poo.

A few months after we moved in, our next-door neighbour, whom we hadn't even met, doubled the height of the spiky steel fence between our gardens. Most suburban houses are surrounded by huge walls designed to keep others out. We live in Aravaca, just down the A6 motorway, but still technically part of Madrid. The contrast with my hometown in Oak Park, a suburb of Chicago, couldn't be greater. Forget chats with loyal neighbours across picket fences. Here, it is all about how to plant a strategic tree so your neighbour can't look into your garden.

Befriending a true Madrileño takes effort. Those born and bred in the city have extended family, plus dozens of friends from school, university and work, so they don't have a lot of time for new people. And yet this is the most welcoming large city in Spain. There are plenty of Spaniards from other regions here who adapt quickly; it is easy to blend in. Madrid is a lot more cosmopolitan than when I first lived here in 1989.

Foreigners who spend time here mostly rave about it. I've known several American families who have passed through for a year or more to learn the language, and one mother tells me: "You come to Spain and you're greeted with a kiss on both cheeks and a platter of Serrano ham. There is no comparison to France." But other immigrants, particularly non-white ones, can expect rougher treatment. Racial tension, while tame in comparison with the Paris *banlieues* or the south side of Chicago, is undoubtedly there.

Mostly, though, Madrid is liberating, and not just because you can stay out late. Much of life takes place outdoors. The city is at its best in spring and late summer, when the street cafés are packed in the late evening. The huge Casa de Campo park is great for biking and walking. My kids play outdoor tennis and basketball all year round. July and August are scorching and best spent elsewhere, but the strong Madrid sun is an asset in winter, bringing both warmth and a clarity of light I've seen nowhere else.

Refreshingly, living here doesn't require a lot of planning. Parents will RSVP to a children's party the day before. Madrileños are spoilt for choice for restaurants and bars that don't require reservations weeks in advance. Dinner parties are relaxed: people don't talk about work as they do in America, or obsess about getting into schools as they do in London – Spanish children in private education usually stay at the same school right through.

Thanks to the climate and the geography, holidays don't need much planning either: you can just get in the car and go. The destination is often a parents' holiday home on the coast or in smaller towns. The city is right in the middle of the peninsula, so all roads lead from Madrid: Valencia is three-and-a-half hours away, and Bilbao not much more. The high-speed train can have you in Barcelona or Seville in under three hours.

Location was one reason why King Felipe II chose to set up his court here in the 16th century. Historians say that Madrid was also free from feuding nobles and could be easily moulded. It grew quickly, but the real explosion happened in the 1950s and 1960s, when the population doubled. Suburbs have sprung up alarmingly during the construction boom, adding millions more people to the total metropolitan area.

No one I know is desperate to leave in the way that many burnt-out Londoners dream of moving to the country. If you need to get away from it all, there are amazing day trips to the sleepy medieval towns of Toledo and Avila. If anything, Madrileños muse about moving for a while to an English-speaking country. Or better still, sending their children away to learn English – this is an obsession in a country where unemployment is over 20%. Madrid's regional government has had a big push to make more state schools bilingual, and the most sought-after private schools are mainly English-speaking or at least half and half.

I find myself obsessing over my children's English, too, even if they are practically bilingual. My two eldest attend a unique Spanish school with barely any instruction in English. If we ever voluntarily moved away from here, it would be to shore up their language skills. But I'm sure that, like most people who leave, we'd eventually come back. It would be hard not to. ■

PLAIN PICTURE AURORA LONELY PLANET

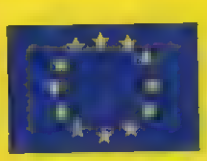
WE LISTENED, WE ADVISED, WE DELIVERED.
SOLUTIONS FOR YOU IN A VOLATILE WORLD

WORLD BANK

US$4 billion

0.500% due 2013
Joint Bookrunner

October 2011



European Union

€5 billion

2.750% due 2021
Joint Bookrunner

September 2011

United Kingdom
Debt Management Office

£4.5 billion

0.375% Index-linked Gilt due 2062
Joint Bookrunner

October 2011

Republic of Hungary

US$3.75 billion

Dual Tranche
Joint Bookrunner

March 2011

Enel

€2.25 billion

Dual Tranche
Joint Bookrunner

October 2011

PEMEX

US$1.25 billion

6.500% due 2041
Joint Bookrunner

October 2011

Sanoma

€904 million

Acquisition of the Dutch and Belgium assets of SBS by Sanoma Corp.
Bookrunner & Mandated Lead Arranger

June 2011

THAI

€61.2 million (estimated)

Lease Financing for 1 Airbus A330-300
Mandated Lead Arranger,
Facility Agent & Security Trustee

September 2011 (Mandated)

Etex
GROUP

€1.3 billion

Acquisition of Lafarge European and Latam Gypsum activities
Bookrunner,
Underwriter & Facility Agent

August 2011

ALSTOM

Cash management bank to interface Alstom's treasury system with its local banks
Sole Bank

September 2011

Dia %

€1.05 billion

Syndicated facility implemented in the context of the demerger from Carrefour
Bookrunner & Coordinator

June 2011

Carrefour Dia %

€2.378 billion

Spin off of Dia by Carrefour
Financial Advisor
& Global Coordinator

July 2011

vodafone

€7.95 billion

Advisor to Vodafone in the sale of its 44% stake in SFR to Vivendi

April 2011

Bankia

€3.1 billion

Initial Public Offering
Joint Bookrunner

July 2011

PORSCHE SE

€5 billion

Rights Issue
Joint Bookrunner

May 2011

JANUS

US$1.5 billion

First open-ended US-based capital protection mutual fund with daily liquidity

May 2011

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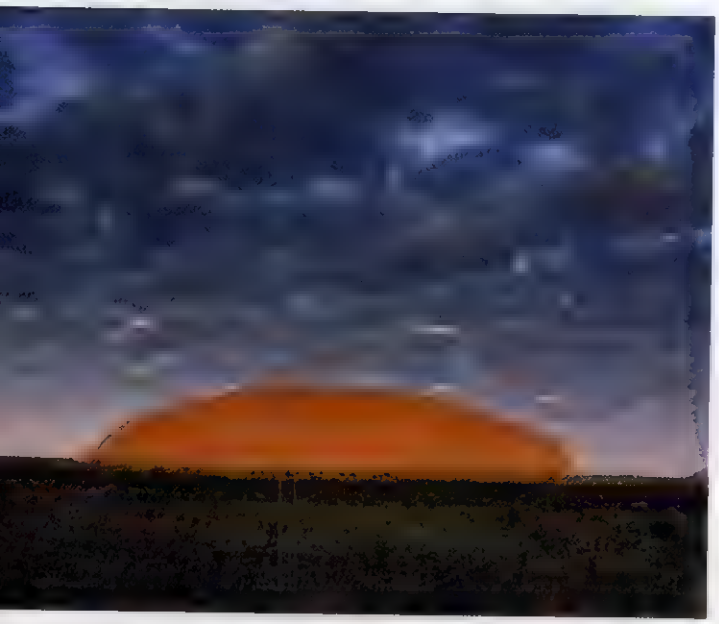
SEVEN WONDERS

Christopher Ondaatje

After growing up in Ceylon and England, Christopher Ondaatje moved to Toronto and flourished as a stockbroker. He branched out into publishing, exploring and writing, and represented Canada in the Winter Olympics in the bobsleigh. He now funds the Ondaatje prize, awarded by the Royal Society of Literature to the book that best evokes the spirit of a place



VIEW ULURU, AUSTRALIA

Nothing is as wonderful as the first sighting of the magnificent red mass of Uluru, or Ayers Rock, in the middle of the outback. It's higher than the Eiffel Tower or the Chrysler Building, measures over five miles around, and extends a mile and a half down into the ground – only a third of it is visible. You can walk to the top, which takes about two hours, but I didn't do it because I was with some Aboriginal guides and they didn't want me to because of the songlines. They believe it's a sacred rock, and made a deal that it wouldn't be climbed by tourists – but people do climb it. I spent several hours walking around it and exploring the caves and the rock art. It is a massive, rugged structure – the Alps are feminine by comparison.

BEACH WELIGAMA BAY, SRI LANKA

The tiny fishing village of Weligama is south of Galle on the south-east coast of Sri Lanka. A broad, semi-circular, sandy beach curves around Weligama Bay, dotted with rocky outcrops and bending coconut palms. Taprobane Island, once owned by the Count de Mauny, lies just off the beach, and you can walk across to it. When we were children we used to stay there often with our parents. At low tide we could wade across to the beach, but when the tide was high the water was above our necks and we'd have to be carried across by the servants. It was a wonderful life before we left for England in 1947. Weligama was badly hit by the tsunami, but it has recovered now and it's beautiful and much the same as it was.

BUILDING EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, NEW YORK

The Empire State Building is the symbol of America, a cultural icon. At 1,454 feet high, including the spire, it was the tallest skyscraper in the world for over 40 years. It was designed by William F. Lamb, and opened in the depths of the Depression in May 1931. It's a beautifully designed and solid building. I've been to the top many times – there are lots of fences and barbed wire to stop people jumping off, so it's not glamorous, but down below is this amazing cityscape. After 9/11 it became again, sadly, the tallest building in New York.

TO THE SOURCE OF THE NILE
The person that drove me, in 1988, to stop hacking through jungles of North was the explorer,Richard Burton. I'd been keeping notes about him for years. My first book was about his early life in India, then I followed his incredible journey to find the source of the Nile. He went in 1856 with John Hanning Speke. It took two and a half years and both men were ill with tropical diseases. Speke "found" Lake Victoria, which he claimed was the source of the Nile, but Burton, who had fallen out with him, had not made that part of the journey and didn't believe he'd found the source. Speke came back to England first, and agreed not to talk about it, but in fact he released the whole story and gazumped Burton. On the day they were due to debate it in front of

WORK OF ART CHANDOS PORTRAIT OF SHAKESPEARE
This is the gift that kicked off the National Portrait Gallery in London, the finest portrait gallery in the world. It was given by Lord Ellesmere in 1856, and is listed number one in the collection. No one knows who actually painted it, possibly Richard Burbage or, more probably, John Taylor; it is named after the 3rd Duke of Chandos, one of its earliest owners. There has been doubt over whether it really is of Shakespeare, but – after a three-and-a-half-year study – Tarnya Cooper of the National Portrait Gallery is convinced that it is. The engraved portrait on the title page of the First Folio shows distinct similarities to this oil painting. I collect portraits: the extraordinary thing about them is that the sitter is more important than the painter.

CITY THE CITY OF LONDON
I don't mean Greater London, just the area within it of just over a square mile known as the City. In medieval times, it was the full extent of London. Today only 10,000 people live in it, but around 330,000 work there. I left Ceylon aged 12 and went to school in England. My family had been wealthy, but by the time I left school they were destitute, so I went into the City and slogged it out from nothing. I learnt about finance, and watched the British Empire disintegrate under my nose – the coir and the coconut, rubber and tea, dwindled to practically nothing. In 1956 [aged 23] I emigrated to Canada with $15 in my pocket. It was great: I could make mistakes and had huge freedom. The City gave me my grounding, so I have an emotional bond with it. In the 1950s it was very different: cold, smoggy, and when you blew your nose it was black. Now they've cleaned it up and you can breathe.

HOTEL GRITTI PALACE, VENICE
The Gritti, set inside a 16th-century doge's palace on the Campo Santa Maria del Giglio, is certainly the best hotel I've ever stayed in – I've been to lots of great hotels and lots of dumps, but the Gritti was everything I'd hoped for. Garbo and Hemingway liked it, too. I went there with my wife about 15 years ago and, although I've only been once, I've never got it out of my mind because it's so romantic. It overlooks the Grand Canal, with the gondoliers below – it is Venice as I think of Venice.

Sir Christopher Ondaatje was talking to Rebecca Willis. His book "The Last Colonial" (Thames & Hudson) is out now

WRITER PICTURES: GETTY; AWL; EVENING NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY; ALAMY

SNAPSHOT

Antarctica

Nacreous clouds take their name from nacre, or mother of pearl, and are less romantically known as Polar Stratospheric Clouds, or PSCs. They form at extremely low temperatures high in the stratosphere, ten miles and more above the Earth, whereas normal clouds might reach six miles at most into the troposphere (the inner layer of the atmosphere).

This picture was taken at McMurdo Station, the US Antarctic research centre, in late August, the end of the dark Antarctic winter, when the sun was starting to return. At such times the sunlight comes from below and is diffracted through the ice crystals which make up the clouds. The photographer, Chad Carpenter, says he had to stop himself shaking with excitement when he saw this sight, and took photographs until his camera battery died.

The silhouetted shape is the shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, a memorial to a construction worker who died here in 1956 when his tractor fell through the ice. There is danger written in these pearly clouds, too: their beautiful iridescent surfaces catalyse the reactions that create the hole in Antarctica's ozone layer. - REBECCA WILLIS

PHOTOGRAPH CHAD CARPENTER

Call me Snowdrop

Will Smith is Santa's little helper

"JUST TREAT ME like any other elf." I make this entreaty to my shift supervisor at Santa's Grotto in Bluewater shopping mall, Kent. It's the kind of thing said by television cops in locker rooms: "I know you all think I didn't get here on merit, that I didn't earn my stripey waistcoat. But I'm a good elf; I've got Santa's back." Not that there's any chance of me coming off as macho: I'm wearing a name-badge saying "Snowdrop". Nonetheless my request is granted and I spend the morning getting the full picture of grotto life.

Many elf duties turn out to be standard retail skills. As part of my induction day the previous week, I had been shown how to use a credit-card machine, change a till roll, and install paper in a photographic printer. I also learnt elf make-up requirements – red nose and cheeks – and that, although I will be given an elf outfit, I am expected to "put the magic in the costume". This means maintaining "character integrity". I can never be off-duty when elf-dressed. If a child stops to speak to me when I'm on a break, I am not Will. I am Snowdrop.

I am told to think of answers to questions that children might ask. Such as: "Why are you so tall?" (Elves shrink as it gets closer to Christmas.) Or: "How will Santa get in my house if I don't have a chimney?" (He has a magic key.) I devise plugs for any holes in my back story: Santa can ingest all the mince pies and sherry left out for him because he has four stomachs, like a cow; the reindeer can fly because they have tiny propellers in their hooves. I will not be caught out by a sarcastic nine-year-old.

In the event, few children ask me anything difficult. They've come to see Santa, not his minion on the grotto booking-desk. It's soon clear that the delight of a child on chancing upon the grotto is matched by the delight of their parents on hearing that entry is free. Another elf tells me I'm lucky to be doing a shift in late November, when there are still plenty of walk-up tickets available. By Christmas Eve slots are scarce or non-existent, and tempers can fray. It has been known for elves to call security. I trust that, in the interests of dramatic coherence, the guards dress as snowmen and urge parents to "cool it".

Next I'm switched to manning the grotto door. My duties are to take the children's "Magic Ticket" – a printout with the booking time – and hand it through the door to another elf. This elf tells Santa the names of the children on the ticket, and hands him presents selected from age- and gender-appropriate sacks. I have to keep an eye on the children left waiting in the queue. Some smile at me excitedly, some stare suspiciously; one crawls through my legs to open the door. I am part children's entertainer, part bouncer, all elf.

By Christmas Eve, tempers can fray. It has been known for elves to call security

I move on to interior-grotto duty, and get to see how the children behave on the other side of the door. Sometimes their rush to get in is replaced by shyness, reluctance, or even tears. No Santa likes to ask "What do you want for Christmas?" only to have an unnerved child wail "I want my mummy!" Generally though, Santa is treated with awe and reverence. The only hiccup occurs when I have no idea how to pronounce a child's name. But it turns out that Chole was a typo, so the parents reintroduce Santa to their lovely daughter, Chloë.

Santa's gifts are all books, and it's heartening that, despite the children's requests for dinosaurs, magic wands, pirate ships and fairies, I do not witness a single instance of disappointment when instead they get reading matter – quite the opposite, they seem overjoyed to be handed a present by Santa Claus himself. Their elation is captured by a large, elf-operated camera, then turned into a photo, key ring, fridge magnet or 3D picture, which I print and take payment for. The three- to seven-year-olds turn out to be one-shot wonders, beaming straight down the lens. The parents of younger children often find themselves having to choose from multiple shots of their cherub facing the wrong way.

After this, my final act as an elf feels distinctly unmagical: the grotto is windowless and hot, so once I have hung up my costume I am told to spray it with Febreze. Never mind flying reindeer, the one question no elf wants to hear is this:

"Why do you smell?" ■

PHOTOGRAPH **RICHARD LEA HAIR**

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